MEXICO'S CORRUPTION AND AMERICA'S BLINDNESS

JAMES WOOD ON MELVILLE'S HARD JOURNEY

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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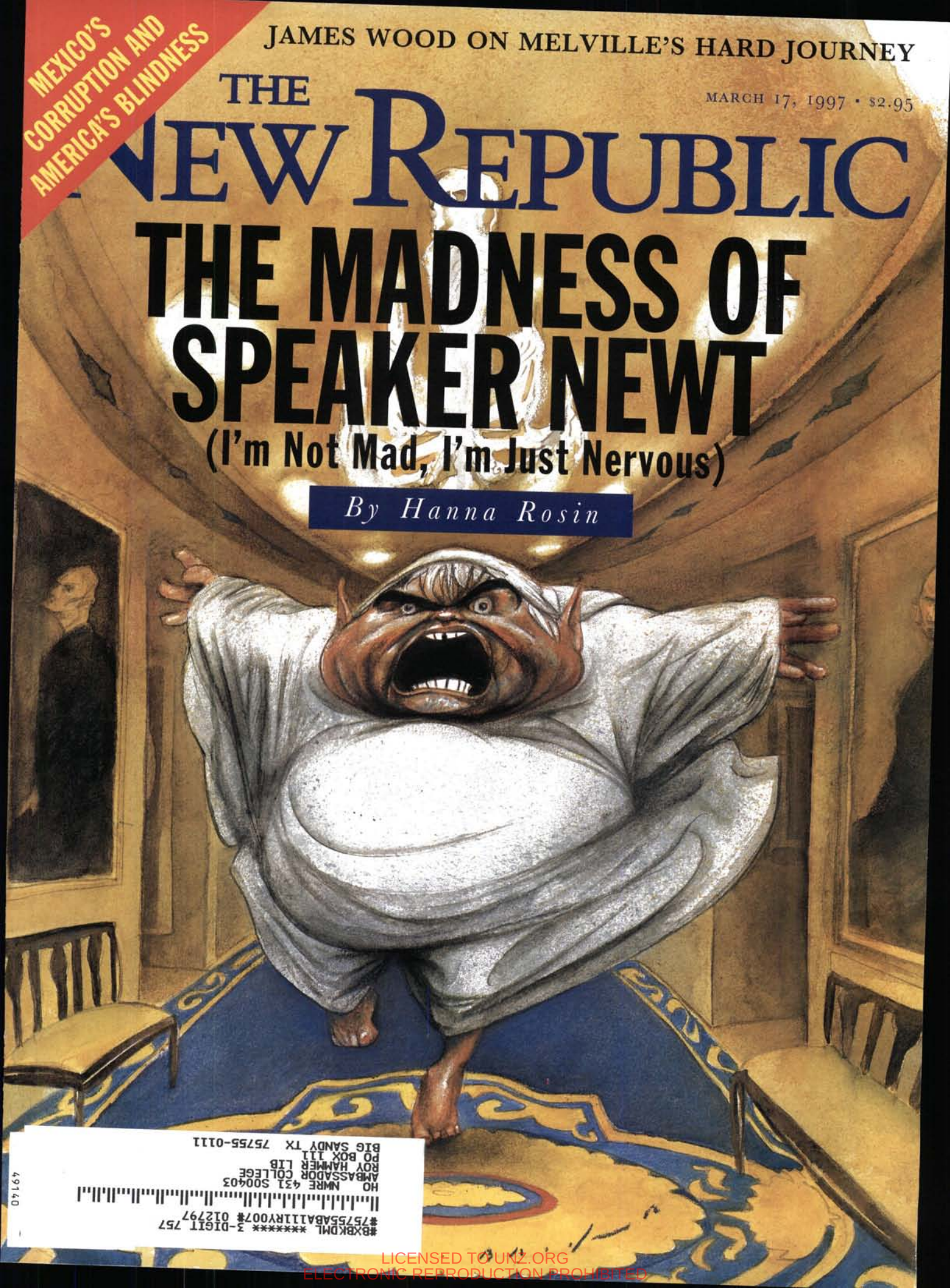
THE MADNESS OF SPEAKER NEWT

(I'm Not Mad, I'm Just Nervous)

By Hanna Rosin



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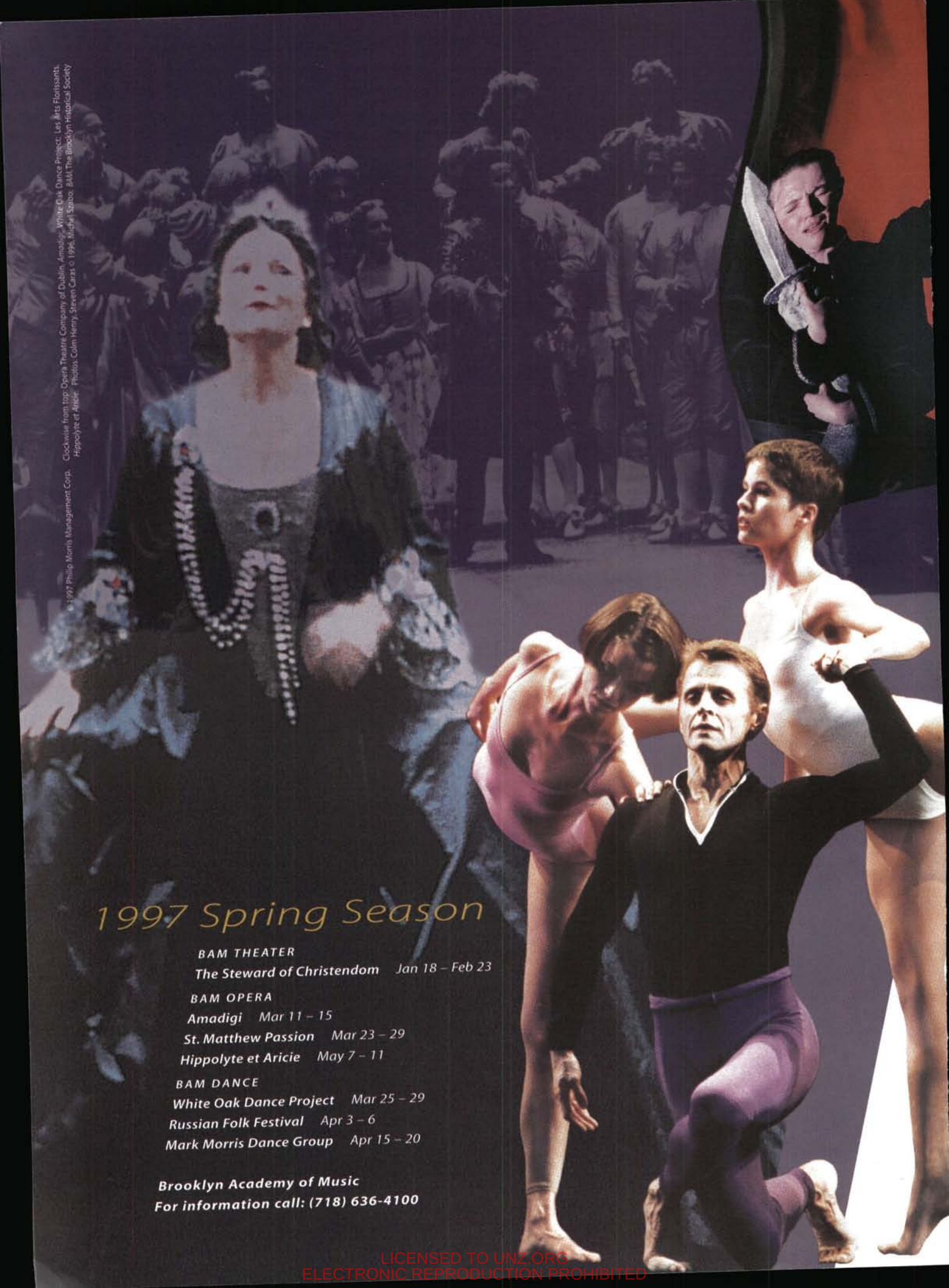

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Clockwise from top: Opera Theatre Company of Dublin, *Amadigi*; White Oak Dance Project; Les Arts Florissants, *Hippolyte et Aricie*. Photos: Colm Henry, Steven Caras © 1996, Michael Szabo, BAM, The Brooklyn Historical Society

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FROM WASHINGTON

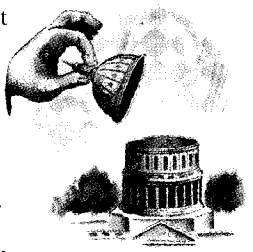
Right and righteous

February 25 was a great day for the study of Clintonism, which is in part the study of the difference between what is right and what is righteous. It is Clinton's wish that he be seen as a profoundly right-thinking president. He ran for re-election on this theme, imaging himself as "the good father," as they said in the White House. He spoke ritualistically of what was the right or the wrong thing, pretending that issues had no politics. "As Americans, there are some things we do simply and solely because they're moral. Right. And good," intoned an announcer on a Democratic National Committee television spot paid for by the president's now famously moral, right and good soft-money machine. "And President Clinton is right to protect Medicare."

This was a good electoral strategy, but it had one large drawback. Bill Clinton is not really a very righteous man. Quite the evident contrary. There is about him an obvious air of the rogue, the seducer, the sly dog, the self-consciously bad boy. One evening late in the 1992 campaign, Clinton came back to the press section of the plane and chatted about what he called "Bill Clinton's Laws of Politics." There were half a dozen of them, and they were as knowing as they were cynical. One was: "When you're starting to have a good time, you're supposed to be someplace else." Another was: "When someone says it's not the money, it's always the money." A third was: "Nearly everyone will lie to you, given the right circumstances." That was a Clinton rarely seen, a thoroughly political and thoroughly practical man, and it was not without its charm. But this Clinton showed himself for only a few minutes, and then the candidate remembered where he was, and Machiavelli disappeared. Clinton began speaking earnestly about education and job training.

Clinton long ago decided that the true political Clinton—which is the Clinton that his friends and supporters find attractive—was not suitable for mass consumption. The more anyone tries to suggest the creature's existence, the more loudly righteous in his denials the public Clinton becomes. And so, as the evidence has mounted and mounted that what we have in the White House is not a paragon but a pol—a fellow who knows that it's always the money and that nearly everyone will lie to you some time—the public Clinton has become ever more moralistic, to a point approaching self-parody.

A point that was reached and passed on February 25, with the disclosure of a document that ranks as one of the funniest smoking guns in political history, a 1995 memo from then-Democratic Finance Chairman Terence McAuliffe to Clinton proposing a plan to reward top party money-givers with coffees, dinners, golf, etc. To McAuliffe's suggestion, the president wrote: "Yes, pursue all 3 and promptly—and get other names at 100,000 or more, 50,000 or more. Ready to start overnights right away—give me the top 10 list back, along w/the 100[,000], 50,000."



Nothing could be more clear than this admirably frank exchange of views. The charge that the president had hotly denied for months—that he and his lieutenants had brokered access to his person and to the White House in exchange for campaign funds—now stood revealed as undeniably true. And in the president's own handwriting.

What was truly wonderful, though, was not the revelation, but the president's reaction to the revelation. On this day, his righteousness finally surpasseth itself. "The Lincoln Bedroom was never 'sold,'" said the man who had declared himself *ready to start overnights right away*. "That was one more false story we have had to endure." The White House spinners picked up the Friends theme. The press office released a list naming 831 first-term overnighters and solemnly dividing them into various categories, none of which mentioned money. They were all just friends: 370 "Arkansas friends," 155 "longtime friends," 111 "friends and supporters," 128 "public officials and dignitaries" and sixty-seven representatives from the world of "arts and letters." But, of course, an "arts and letters" type could also be a financial contributor or fund-raiser, and the same could be said of the "longtime friends" and "Arkansas friends." As the president's increasingly beleaguered mouthpiece, White House special counsel Lanny Davis, explained to an openly incredulous Ted Koppel, just because somebody gives the president money doesn't mean he's not a friend.

Koppel: "I don't see anything in either Mr. McAuliffe's memo or in the president's notation referring to friends. This is strictly money we're talking about here."

Davis: "... The fact that that note doesn't use the word 'friends,' Ted, doesn't mean they're not friends."

As it happened, the other event of February 25 illustrating the difference between right and righteousness in Clintonism also involved "Nightline." In November 1995, as the debate over partial-birth abortion hit its stride, a prominent pro-choicer named Ron Fitzsimmons appeared on the program to argue the pro-choice party line that the hideous procedure—a late-term baby is delivered vaginally feet first up to its head, and then the physician suctions its brains through a hole driven through the base of its skull—was performed primarily to save the lives or childbearing capability in a handful of women who were carrying badly deformed babies. Fitzsimmons has now courageously recanted, in the March 3 issue of *American Medical News*, which *The New York Times* reported in a semi-buried story. In his earlier statements, Fitzsimmons wrote, he had "lied through [his] teeth." In truth, said Fitzsimmons, most partial-birth abortions involve a healthy baby that is twenty weeks or more old, and a healthy mother, and "the abortion-rights folks know it."

Last April, when Clinton vetoed a bill that would have banned partial-birth abortions in almost all cases, he had one of his finest moments of righteousness ever. Appearing at the White House with five women that he said had received such abortions in order to preserve their lives or health, Clinton said the women epitomized the truth: "There are a few hundred women every year who have personally agonizing situations where their children are born or are about to be born with terrible deformities, which will cause them to die either just before, during or just after childbirth. And these women, among other things, cannot preserve the ability to have further children unless the ... enormous size of the baby's head is reduced before being extracted from their bodies."

Many who heard Clinton speak these angry, passionate words say they were moved. But this turns out to be what critics said at the time, another utterance by Bill Clinton that was politically advantageous but entirely untrue. Perhaps the president will join Ron Fitzsimmons in acknowledging the truth. It would be the right, not the righteous, thing to do.

MICHAEL KELLY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

MARCH 17, 1997

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WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 4,287

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 216, Number 11, Issue 4,287, March 17, 1997. (Printed in the U.S. on February 26, 1997.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 6 & 13, July 14 & 21, Aug. 11 & 18, and Sept. 8 & 15, 1997) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling).

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(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Party pooper

To the editors:

OK, we admit it ... we had a party. Maybe Stephen Glass ("Rock the Morons," February 10) mistook it for an issue forum, but we double-checked the invitation, and it said in big letters: P-A-R-T-Y.

Rock the Vote registered over 500,000 new voters last year. That is an awful lot for a small organization that is only 6 years old. We made it possible for the first time ever to register to vote over an 800 number and on the Internet. With messages on MTV and on youth-oriented radio stations, we served as an entry point into politics for many young people who see little in politics that inspires their faith or participation.

Music artists and other entertainers who cared enough to contribute their talent and their time were an important key to this success, but equally important were the efforts of countless young volunteers across the country who spearheaded local voter registration drives in their communities. We think these outstanding young people would have been a better subject for your story, rather than sweeping generalizations about "politically dim 24-year-olds" and "empty-headed celebrities."

There is a big problem in this country with voter participation—1996 saw the lowest voter turnout levels since 1924 for all ages of voters. We believe both politicians and the press need to re-evaluate their relationships with the public in an effort to reconnect the wiring of American democracy. When TNR wants to address these issues, we'd love to talk to you about them.

MARK STRAMA
Program Director, Rock the Vote
Santa Monica, California

To the editors:

What a stupid, mean-spirited article Stephen Glass wrote in your February 10 issue. Why the petty attack on Jewel and Michael Bolton? They were in D.C. to perform at an inaugural ball and were invited to the Rock the Vote party. I'm sure they weren't aware that accepting that invitation meant they were supposed to get degrees in political science. I don't believe Rock the Vote has ever been intended for anything other than for rock stars to help urge young people to vote.

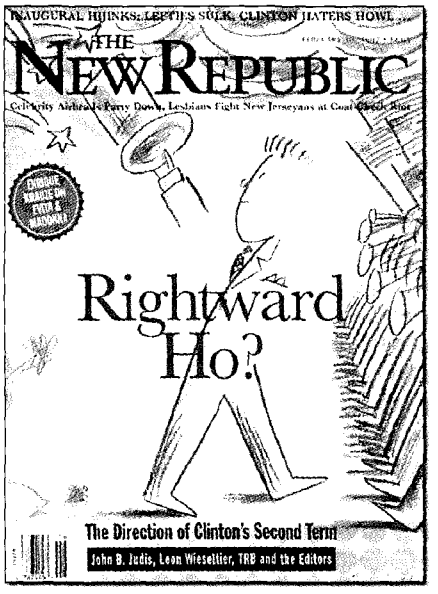
It's easy for someone like Glass to put celebrities down for lending their names to good causes. It takes some work, however, to be a good reporter. I would match Bolton's public service against Glass's any day.

CASSANDRA KENNEDY
Washington, D.C.

"D" for democratic

To the editors:

Usually, I don't pay much attention to bad reviews, but the shallowness, silliness and inaccuracy of Romesh Ratnesar's "Radical Unchic" (February 10) concerning Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) begs a reply. First, ADA National Director Amy Isaacs is adamant that she did not say that ADA hopes President Clinton will return to core liberal values in his second term "when he's not accountable to constituents." Instead, she


INAUGURAL HIJINKS: LEFTIES SULK, CLINTON HATERS HOWL
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Rightward Ho?
The Direction of Clinton's Second Term
John B. Judis, Leon Wieseltier, TRB and the Editors

expressed hope that he will lean more liberally now that he no longer has to "look over his right shoulder." There's an important distinction between the two quotes. The "D" in ADA stands for democratic, and ADA firmly believes that elected officials should be accountable always to the people who elect them.

Second, Ratnesar's statement that ADA has convinced itself that Clinton II "will awaken liberal spirits" is simply untrue. As I explained to him at ADA's inaugural ball, we endorsed Clinton in 1996 for pragmatic reasons: to help stem the tide of the Republican Revolution of 1994. We openly acknowledged that we disagreed with him on several issues but were confident that he shares many of our core values. Now that he has been re-elected, the challenge facing liberals is to build a constituency that can push both Clinton and Congress to the left. That is a task that will involve a lot of hard work, extending beyond the next election.

Ratnesar dismissed ADA Vice President John Sweeney's defense of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid as "static" and "boring." Tell that to anyone who depends on those programs for their survival.

Finally, I found somehow peculiar Ratnesar's pointed reference to the fact that, even though ADA's inaugural ball was billed as "casual," a "fair number" of guests wore tuxedos and party attire "anyway." If he had thought about it, he would have realized that many of ADA's guests also attended more formal events that night. Rather than being "half-empty," the ballroom in the later hours of the evening was packed. Ratnesar also failed to mention that the ballroom with ADA's rhythm and blues band (not '70s guitar-rock) was only half of the party. ADA had rented the entire bottom floor of the hotel, with several large rooms where people could gather to sit, talk and plot the liberal resurgence.

TNR sent three reporters to the ADA inaugural ball. Two of them seemed primarily to hang out, having a good time. Unfortunately, the one who wrote the story seemed to have preconceived notions about what to write. That is indeed unfortunate because, as I mentioned to him at the time, there once was a constructive relationship between ADA and TNR in helping to coalesce liberal opinion. With articles like "Radical Unchic," however, there isn't much substance with which to start. Whoever said, for example, that liberals are supposed to be radical in the first place?

ROBERT J. CAROLLA
Director of Communications,
Americans for Democratic Action, Inc.

Romesh Ratnesar replies:

I am quite certain Amy Isaacs did not intend to imply that a re-elected President Clinton should abandon principles of democratic government and ignore the "people who elected him." I am equally certain, and have recorded in my notes from our interview, that she told me on inaugural night that she believes Clinton may return to his liberal roots now that "he's not accountable to constituents." I took her to mean that Clinton can now spend his second term governing, rather than campaigning for his next election. That's the hope of most Americans, not just liberals.

Hopeful

To the editors:

I'm not sure whether Michael Kelly is immoderately cynical or wildly partisan ("Rope-A-Hope," February 10). In either case, his dismissive treatment of President Clinton's vision of hope for the

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country generally and education specifically misses two remarkably obvious points. First, Americans *want* their president to envision for the country that which they may not or cannot—a better day, a brighter future, a reason to hope. Second, this president has championed some of the most progressive efforts to date to better our public schools and to help provide the opportunity of higher education to everyone. And he will do more still.

In 1995, Clinton launched one of the biggest budget fights over issues like education and crime in presidential history. Clinton's commitment forced an embarrassed Republican Congress to revisit the extreme cuts that forced two government shutdowns and to produce the biggest education budget to date.

Kelly goes out of his way to point out that the education picture for black students is catastrophic with, he says, "nearly half of all black high school seniors in Bill Clinton's America ... functionally illiterate." But, in FY 1997, President Clinton got a $464 million increase over 1996 funding for Title I, the Department of Education's primary education program to help low-achieving students—particularly those in high-poverty schools—meet the same challenging academic and content and performance standards expected of all children. Clinton's 1998 education budget calls for a $347 million increase in Title I. Clinton has helped raise the maximum Pell Grant by $400, or 17 percent—from $2,300 in 1993 to $2,700 in 1997. On February 6, Clinton announced a 25 percent increase in Pell Grants, up $1.7 billion, to help raise the maximum award to $3,000 and provide grants to an additional 348,000 needy students. His "America Reads Challenge" will provide individualized and small-group assistance after school, on weekends and during the summer for K-4 students who are behind in reading.

Kelly is right about one thing—Clinton's visions *are* noble goals. But they are worthy goals, even critical. And it should not be for Kelly to tell us we should not strive for safer schools, higher standards for our children, better access to college. It is for our nation's leader to tell us that we can and that we should.

LESLIE T. THORNTON
U.S. Education Department
Washington, D.C.

His truth is marching on

To the editors:

Leon Wieseltier reports ("A Bridge Too Far," February 10) a change in "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," as sung by an Arkansas choir at the presidential inauguration. Julia Ward Howe wrote: "As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free." The revised version says, "let us live to make men free." Wieseltier calls this "an apotheosis of Clintonism."

Actually, I first heard the "new" version as a high school boy in a Toledo, Ohio, church in the early 1930s. It came out of the hopeful peace movement of those times. Unless it was miraculously clairvoyant, it could not have been "an apotheosis of Clintonism," since Clinton was not born until more than a decade later. Many of us who sang that song later went off to fight, often to die, in World War II.

Most people who sing the original hymn in our time have no intention of dying in battle. But the song is a historical monument. The revision, as Wieseltier says, has "no darkness, no difficulty, no death." But, if we were really to restore these in all their grim reality, we might do one more revision, "let us kill to make men free." But then, I suppose, we couldn't sing those words at any president's inauguration.

ROGER SHINN
Southbury, Connecticut

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MARCH 17, 1997

DESTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT II

South Korea, freed at the cost of over 30,000 American lives four decades ago, and still defended by 37,000 American troops today, is a prosperous, rapidly democratizing country. North Korea, meanwhile, is one of the last communist despotisms, a place where peasants forage for edible roots while the ruling clique reportedly spent up to $1 million to embalm its deceased "Great Leader," Kim Il Sung. The autocrats in Pyongyang have sunk billions into nuclear weapons development, sold sophisticated missile technology to dangerous Middle Eastern regimes and dispatched spy submarines and hit men to the South.

But guess who the Clinton administration privately blames for the dicey atmosphere on the Korean peninsula? "South Korea's steadily increasing attitude of hostility toward North Korea has begun to pose as much or more of an obstacle to a reduction of tensions on the peninsula than any recent provocation by North Korea." So writes R. Jeffrey Smith of *The Washington Post*, summarizing recent conversations with administration Asia hands. These officials, Smith writes, see South Korean President Kim Young Sam as "occasionally dictatorial" and "mired" in "counterproductive antipathy to the North."

Such bland moral equivalences are a sure sign that the administration's so-called "engagement" of North Korea has gone too far. Of course, American dealings with the North were once born of pragmatic necessity. In 1993, North Korea was found to be in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; the North stirred up controversy again a year later, when it tried to prevent international inspectors from visiting its nuclear sites. But there was, understandably, no stomach in this country, Japan or South Korea for a showdown that could inflame China and embroil the whole northeast Asian region in a new arms race or an actual war. Choosing the second-best option, Warren Christopher's State Department struck a deal: Pyongyang could keep whatever nuclear weapons it already had but also had to promise to cease further bomb-making in exchange for U.S. and South Korean help with a "peaceful" nuclear program.

Fair enough. But Christopher's Asia hands saw greater possibilities: an "opening" to the North that would give rise to a North-South peace treaty, "integration" of the self-isolated North into the global economy and, someday, a "soft-landing" for the crumbling regime in Pyongyang. The North Korea project was the East Asian analogue to Christopher's courtship of Syria in pursuit of a grand Middle East settlement. The thinking behind the approach to North Korea, too, was reactive and imprecise: America's troops in South Korea were conceived not as a deterrent shield but as virtual hostages. And North Korea was portrayed as a state that somehow became more capable of an assault on the South as it became politically more fractious and economically weaker. American excuses for Northern bad behavior accompanied growing "inducements"—from food to fuel—for Northern "good behavior."

These blandishments give North Korea an opportunity to snatch victory from the jaws of its own systemic failure and ideological defeat. Pyongyang's objective has always been to entangle the United States in protracted, tantalizing bargaining that would gradually separate Washington from Seoul and thus raise its own international legitimacy. Incredibly, the North has made some headway toward this goal. American officials are reportedly considering a high-level bilateral diplomatic meeting with Pyongyang and other favors as rewards for the North's grudging agreement to attend a U.S.-sponsored "briefing" on future North-South peace talks. The South Koreans, justifiably irate, contend that the U.S. has already conceded too many tangible benefits to the North in return for too little. We agree.

U.S. concessions should be linked to concrete Northern steps toward recognition of Seoul. Given the North's growing weakness (dramatically illustrated last month by the defection of high-ranking official Huang Jang Yop), and its growing dependence on foreign food, it would seem that the United States and South Korea are in a position to drive a hard bargain if they act in concert. "Reduced tensions" are well and good, but not at the price of obscuring the fundamental issues on the peninsula: the aggressive nature of North Korean communism and the human freedom of the 23 million people north of the 38th parallel. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, not known to be burdened by Christopherian moral equivalences, has just been to Seoul on a fence-mending trip. That's a start, but it will take more to restore realism and balance to U.S.-Korea policy. The United States must toughen its bargaining posture toward Pyongyang. The North will fulminate. But "tension" with that decrepit and brutal regime hardly dishonors the last remaining superpower. Still less is it a reason to lose our nerve. •

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NOTEBOOK

BEDFELLOWS: Now that the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill has been left for dead (see Hanna Rosin, "Teamwork," March 10), everyone seems eager for a piece of the carcass. Last week, the National Right to Life Committee fired off letters to members of Congress slamming McCain-Feingold and its equivalents in the House and warning that votes in its favor will be deemed an offense against the movement. How exactly does curbing soft money harm the fetus? Because, explains the NRLC, the bills "approve multiple, unprecedented mechanisms to ration and suppress communications to the public." In other words, they curb PAC money from groups like the NRLC. And who else is happily thumping nails into campaign finance reform's coffin? None other than the ultra-pro-choice American Civil Liberties Union. Several weeks ago the ACLU sent a missive to Kentucky Senator Mitch McConell denouncing McCain-Feingold as "fundamentally flawed when measured against First Amendment values." The bill's alleged crimes: limiting soft money and restricting donations from non-citizens, among other things. So it's true: McCain-Feingold has brought pro-life activists and civil libertarians together. Finally, rancor gives way to common ground.

FINANCIAL ARTS: The just-released list of 831 Clinton friends who slept at the White House in the president's first term offered more than an inside look at how the administration peddled influence. It also provided an inadvertent picture of the sorry state of America's cultural life. The Clintons divided their guests into five categories. Some in the "Arkansas friends" group, we regret to inform, were rather crass characters. But the real shocker came in the fifth, and most highbrow, category, the exalted "Arts and Letters," which sounds like a new section in the *Times*. Only sixty-seven qualified for this prestigious designation. Among their number, such artistic and literary giants as Ted Danson, Judy Collins, Jane Fonda, Tom Hanks, Ted Turner and Chevy Chase. Thank goodness Clinton didn't have to raise the money necessary to win a close race in 1996. He might have opened up the Lincoln Bedroom to mere commercial entertainers.

WHOSE GAIN? As a capital gains tax cut grows increasingly certain, legislators are tossing aside their flimsy economic rationales and zeroing in on their true motivations: delivering pork to their more well-heeled constituents. Recently Senate Democratic Whip Wendell Ford proposed cutting the capital gains two percentage points for every year an asset is held, down to a 14 percent rate after eight years. Ford claims this would be better targeted to middle-class investors than the Republican capital gains tax cut, but he provides no evidence to support that assertion. The Kentucky Democrat seems to be forgetting that the best (or, at least, the closest approximation to a good) rationale for cutting the capital gains tax is reducing the "lock-in effect." The argument goes like this: since you pay taxes on the appreciation of an asset only when it's sold, you have an incentive to hold on, which keeps people from shifting their money into more productive ventures. But Ford's proposal, by decreasing the capital gains rate over time, would actually *increase* the lock-in effect; the longer you hold on, the lower your taxes. Ford's justification: his plan would help farmers and business owners—as his staff frankly put it, "middle-income constituents"—in his home state. Give him points for honesty, if not statesmanship.

BOOB TUBE: Seeking to score points against the alleged laxity of the new TV ratings, Representative Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) lashed out last week at the disgusting lasciviousness and violence of one network program in particular: "I cringe when I realize that there were children all across this nation watching this program. They were exposed to the violence of multiple gunshot head wounds, vile language, full frontal nudity and irresponsible sexual activity. It simply should not have been allowed on public television." So we offer a little quiz. To which of the following was Coburn referring? a. "NYPD Blue" (ABC); b. "Melrose Place" (Fox); c. "Singled Out" (MTV); d. "Thomas Jefferson" (PBS); e. "Schindler's List" (NBC); f. "Proceedings of the House of Representatives" (C-SPAN). The answer: e. Next target: Christiane Amanpour's excessively violent reporting from Bosnia.

BLEEDING HEARTS: Who says conservatives aren't compassionate? After pushing through a welfare law that critics charge will throw 2.6 million people off the rolls, Republican leaders are supporting a handful of them by hiring them as Capitol Hill staffers. "[Speaker] Newt [Gingrich] and Senator [Trent] Lott have talked about the idea and how we can put it into action," Gingrich's spokesman told *The Hill* newspaper, touting the Capitol's "positive work environment." Indeed, just think of some of the perks: mid-winter furloughs during government shutdowns, sensitivity training with Jesse Helms, late nights with Strom Thurmond and charm lessons with Barney Frank. Too bad Bob Packwood isn't around.

HOME NEWS: This week marks several shifts in our editorial staff. David Grann, former Executive Editor of *The Hill*, which covers the inner workings of Congress, becomes Managing Editor. Current Managing Editor Peter Beinart becomes Acting Executive Editor, and Executive Editor Margaret Talbot moves to Senior Editor, while Assistant Editor Debra Durocher becomes Assistant Managing Editor. Matthew Miller, TNR's economics editor, who has gamely sorted out the mysteries of, among other things, Medicare Part A and Medicare Part B, is leaving for *U.S. News & World Report*, and Senior Editor Michael Lewis becomes a Contributing Editor. •

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Where he stood

For twenty-six years, the almost comically dour mug of Albert Shanker gazed up from "Where We Stand," the weekly ad of the American Federation of Teachers that ran in TNR, the Sunday *New York Times* and elsewhere. It was one of the many ironies of Shanker's life that he had to pay to have his ideas published. For Shanker, who died last week, was our Dewey, the most important American educator in half a century.

Shanker aroused passion throughout his life, and never more so than during the 1968 teachers' strike in New York, which pitted the predominantly Jewish leadership of the union against the black members of an experimental school board in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Brooklyn. The board had dismissed thirteen, and later hundreds, of teachers without cause. Its actions were clearly illegal. But "community control" was a rallying cry of the left in the 1960s, and even a liberal labor reporter like Murray Kempton denounced Shanker as a "goon" for opposing the board's reforms. The confrontation led to the "decentralization" of the city's school system into thirty-two semi-autonomous districts and severed the historic alliance between the city's Jews and blacks. The union eventually triumphed, but Shanker's liberal image was tarnished. The battle became the progenitor of the fights to come between old left unionists, concerned with economic betterment, and new left radicals, who embraced identity politics.

In *Sleeper*, Woody Allen wakes up to discover the world has been destroyed and learns, "A man by the name of Albert Shanker got hold of a nuclear warhead." It must have been frustrating for Shanker to have his legacy reduced to an obscure joke, particularly since real history—not joke history—proved him right. Decentralization failed, and nowhere more so than in some of the city's poorest districts, where it led to exactly the kind of corruption and political patronage that Shanker had warned against. But the system persisted until last December. Shanker lived to see his role vindicated—but just barely. By the late 1970s, the media had turned to flashier pundits, and Shanker labored in relative obscurity. Allen didn't have him wrong. Shanker *was* a dangerous man. Because he was intellectually honest.

He was born on September 14, 1928, to two ardently trade-unionist, anti-communist Jewish immigrants. "Ours was the only Jewish family for blocks. On Sundays, I'd walk down the street and could hear Father Coughlin's anti-Semitic sermons coming through the window." When Shanker was 13, he joined the Boy Scouts, which provided him with his first real organizing experience. After four months of drills, Shanker happened upon a scout master's handbook and learned that Boy Scouts weren't supposed to march, but to camp. He rallied his fellow troop members, drew up a list of demands, collected signatures and presented a petition to his scout master. Within months, the troop had grown from fifteen boys to nearly a hundred.

Shanker attended Stuyvesant High School and went on to the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. The year was 1946, and soldiers were returning to college on the GI bill. The university's housing bureau openly advertised rooms "For WASPs Only." The young Shanker joined an interracial committee at the local Unitarian Church, which fought to integrate the town's restaurants and movie theaters by staging sit-ins and demonstrations. During the summers, he worked to integrate New York's public pools. In time, he joined Andrew Young and Bayard Rustin to help organize Freedom Summer and marched in Montgomery and Selma. He received his bachelor's degree in 1949 and headed to Columbia University to begin a doctorate in philosophy.

When his dissertation flagged, he decided to teach sixth grade as a "permanent substitute" at an elementary school in East Harlem, and later transferred to a junior high in Queens, where he taught math. The math-teacher image would hurt Shanker in later years, making him seem mechanistic and charmless. But he was a devoted teacher with broad interests. Over the years, he became an audiophile, an accomplished cook, an amateur photographer and a collector of African art and Native American jewelry. But his genius was as an organizer. In a decade, he built the union John Dewey founded from a few thousand members to a 60,000-strong organization that would strike at his command.

In the late 1950s, there were more than 100 different groups representing teachers in New York and their political clout was nil. Conditions in many schools were horrible. Shanker joined the New York Teachers' Guild and before long was organizing full-time for the AFT. When the High School Teachers' Association went on strike, Shanker got his members to join the picket line, and eventually the two unions merged. The United Federation of Teachers was born. Shanker persuaded Mayor Robert Wagner to guarantee a collective-bargaining election. Soon, the UFT was exclusively representing the city's teachers at the bargaining table. It was the first time teachers had won the right to negotiate, like other workers, over bread-and-butter issues.

Then came Ocean Hill-Brownsville and the 1970s. Shanker was elected president of the AFT, a position he held for the rest of his life. But, because of the city's fiscal crisis, the UFT local fell on hard times. Shanker offered the teachers' pension funds to help save the city from bankruptcy. Still, thousands of teachers were laid off. But, nationwide, the union prospered and forced the National Education Association, its historic rival, to grow along with it, by challenging its policies and competing with it for members. Today, the AFT has more than 900,000 members.

The 1980s saw growing attacks on public education, beginning with the "Nation at Risk" report. But, rather than respond defensively, Shanker urged his members to embrace reform. He briefly entertained the idea of "radically restructuring" schools but soon concluded, with characteristic common-sense, that recreating an entire system from scratch would never be practical (though he supported charter programs). And choice, he insisted, was meaningless without national standards that would enable parents to compare schools. He argued that what students really needed was fewer superficial courses in self-esteem and the like and more in-depth classes that covered basic subjects thoroughly.

In his State of the Union address, President Clinton embraced national standards as part of his own reform package. The vindication came late for Shanker, but it was sweet all the same. After the address, Clinton called Shanker, who was already dying. "We should have listened to you sooner," the president said. We all should have.

SARA MOSLE

SARA MOSLE is a contributing writer for *The New York Times Magazine* and is working on a book about Shanker.

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LOSING BALANCE

By Jonathan Chait

In 1995, Democratic Congressman Tim Johnson co-sponsored the Balanced Budget Amendment. One year later, the South Dakotan successfully stumped for the Senate, touting this virtuous stance. But last week he had an intellectual revelation. "Because of a new, disturbing analysis done by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service," Johnson announced, "I will only support a balanced budget amendment that protects Social Security."

"Analysis" may be a bit of a stretch. The study that turned Johnson's vote is actually a five-paragraph letter, written at Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle's behest, making a simple point: if the budget had to be balanced yearly, then built-up Social Security reserves could not pay for future deficits. This may seem obvious even to budgetary novices, but Johnson, apparently, was floored.

Johnson's ensuing about-face all but doomed the amendment. Republican Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete Domenici immediately demanded a Congressional Research Service analysis of his own. The same staffer who dashed off the first letter, Johnny Killian, dutifully produced an even shorter letter making the equally obvious point that, under a balanced budget amendment, Congress could still allow Social Security deficits by running a surplus in the rest of the budget. Domenici rushed to the Senate floor to announce the "correction." Killian, meanwhile, maintains that both letters said the same thing and remains baffled as to why his memos are dictating the future of the United States Constitution.

Johnson's conversion is just the latest somersault congressional Democrats have turned to defeat the Balanced Budget Amendment. The orgy of flip-flopping stems from the Democratic Party's long-standing inability to formulate any effective rejoinder to a balanced budget amendment; a thirty-second TV spot can't explain the folly of locking an unalterable fiscal policy into the Constitution. Hence, for years, politically vulnerable or intellectually pliant Democrats endorsed the amendment, counting on more principled colleagues to vote their conscience. But this latter group has turned out to be rather small. So the Democratic leadership has devised a tactic for wafflers: support the amendment only if it excludes Social Security. This offers cover for congressmen to switch their votes as well as an easy two-word argument against the Balanced Budget Amendment.

The Social Security strategy has unified the Democrats and split the Republicans. Even 1994's freshman radicals, like David McIntosh and Mark Neumann, are diving for cover. McIntosh conceded to *The Washington Post* that he didn't want to leave Republicans "open to the attacks we had last year on Medicare."

Indeed, the Social Security strategy echoes last year's campaign in that the Democrats have taken a complex fiscal issue and boiled it down to the fate of one popular entitlement. This infuriates not only Republicans—who booed President Clinton when he raised the subject during his State of the Union address—but also the press, which associates any defense of entitlement spending with demagoguery. A *Post* headline labeled the tactic "PLAYING THE SOCIAL SECURITY CARD." Liberal *Wall Street Journal* columnist Al Hunt bemoaned the "bogus claim that the amendment will endanger Social Security."

Democratic assertions about Social Security may not be entirely honest, but they're not entirely wrong, either. The Balanced Budget Amendment would shave all spending, including Social Security. It would also kill the Social Security Trust Fund. Social Security, as everyone now knows, faces huge deficits when the baby-boomers retire. But, unlike the rest of the budget, Social Security cannot legally go into debt. As a result, it's building up huge surpluses in order to fund future Social Security deficits. You may have heard people like Ross Perot dismiss this trust fund as mere accounting. Well, yes, it is. So is the national debt. In public finance, accounting matters. The Balanced Budget Amendment precludes such long-term financing. Congress could no longer use surpluses from one year to offset deficits in another. Thus, when the demographic crisis hits, Social Security could run deficits only if it borrows from the rest of an already strained budget. That could indeed endanger Social Security.

But the more likely outcome of the Balanced Budget Amendment would be for Congress to maintain Social Security, which enjoys broader support than any other spending program. Current Social Security taxes would help finance the rest of the budget for about twenty-five years. Thereafter, regular taxes would help pay for Social Security. The end result? The non-Social Security budget would run up deficits today and surpluses in the future. Budgetarily speaking, this would be dystopia. The Democrats' balanced budget amendment, which exempts Social Security, makes much better—although still not good—fiscal sense.

Is that why so many Democrats support it? Of course not. Removing the trust fund from the annual budget allows future generations to run deficits, sure. But only at the cost of sacrifice today. Balancing the budget without the trust fund would require an additional $450 billion in deficit reduction over the next five years. Democrats say that's just what they want. "Our amendment balances the budget honestly," crows North Dakota Senator Byron Dorgan, simultaneously outflanking the GOP on the right (chest-thumping budgetary machismo) and the left (cuddly defense of senior citizens). Republicans insist it's

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a bluff. Democrats privately agree.

So why don't Republicans call it? Surely, if one takes seriously their rhetoric, a balanced budget amendment without Social Security is better than no amendment at all. A few GOP deficit zealots are posing the same question. California Congressman Elton Gallegly, who prefers exempting Social Security but would support an amendment either way, has asked the party leadership to compromise. "[Our conversations] always end with them saying, 'I hear you. I sure can't disagree with you,' " Gallegly reports, exasperated. So they don't put up any justification at all? Gallegly pauses. "Here's one argument I get back: 'It doesn't belong in the Balanced Budget Amendment.' " Hmm. Is it possible that the Republican leaders have grown so attached to their poll-tested baby that they care more about preserving the sanctity of the Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution than the sanctity of the Constitution itself?

Or consider another possibility: the GOP leadership doesn't really want to pass the amendment. Indeed, any short-term political dividends would be offset by the long-term costs of having to impose painful sacrifice on voters. Letting the amendment die, on the other hand, would have no downside. "If they lose, they win," observes a top Democratic staffer. Republicans could continue to torment their foes every two years, forcing them to choose between political expediency and conscience. It's the political gift that keeps on giving.

Most Democrats share this assumption. Should the Dorgan amendment ever enter the Constitution, the party of government couldn't stomach the draconian cuts required. Both sides would leap from the cliff together, yes, but the Democrats would land on the bottom. They wouldn't issue the dare if they thought the GOP would take them up on it. Each party believes that the other is acting deceitfully, and they're both right. •

Mexico's corruption, Washington's indifference.

CERTIFIABLE

By Susan E. Reed

The first thing to understand about drug corruption in Mexico, and the Clinton administration's failure to deal with it, is that the capture of General Jesus Gutiérrez Rebollo was an accident. Until a few weeks ago, Gutiérrez was Mexico's top official in the war on drugs, appointed in December to head the National Institute to Combat Drugs (INCD), Mexico's version of the Drug Enforcement Administration. Gutiérrez was also, allegedly, on the take from one of Mexico's major drug cartels, an embarrassment he hid from his bosses and from Washington for seven years. But the general's new appointment went to his head. Apparently deciding he was not living up to his station in life, Gutiérrez rented an apartment in a fancy neighborhood. When Gutiérrez's boss, Defense Secretary Enrique Cervantes Aguirre, heard about his employee's new digs, they struck him as too rich for a general's salary. Shortly before midnight on February 6, Cervantes summoned Gutiérrez and started questioning him.

Cervantes would later tell reporters that Gutiérrez became "visibly worried and disturbed by the questions and gave confused answers." Watching Gutiérrez sputter and gasp, Cervantes suddenly realized that the 62-year-old might be suffering a heart attack, and he sent him to the hospital. Over the next few days, while Gutiérrez lay recovering from what was in fact a mild heart attack, the questioning continued. It soon focused on the general's relationship with the Mexican national Amado Carillo Fuentes, who some DEA officials consider to be the world's most powerful drug trafficker, and who is believed to control the movement of drugs into the United States through Ciudad Juárez, a border boom city just across the Rio Grande from El Paso that has become in recent years a main point of entry for drugs coming into the United States. Carillo "can move drugs anywhere in the U.S." from Brownsville to San Diego, "anytime he wants to, day or night," says Peter Lupsha, a senior researcher at the University of New Mexico's Latin American Institute. Lupsha estimates Carillo grosses $10 billion a year from his drug running and attendant businesses. It is said that he pays millions in bribes each year to keep himself in business. On February 18, Defense Secretary Cervantes announced that Gutiérrez had aided the Carillo cartel for seven years by protecting cocaine shipments in exchange for vehicles, real estate and cash.

It is hard to imagine a drug-war development more embarrassing for the Clinton administration. Just weeks ago, the administration had welcomed Gutiérrez to Washington, where U.S. drug czar General Barry McCaf-

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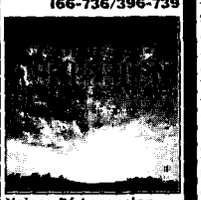
Mozart: *Magic Flute, Gardiner cond. (Archiv)* **166-736/396-739**



Voices Of Ascension—*Chant To Renaissance (Delos)* **166-678**

Yanni—*Live At The Acropolis (Private Music)* **475-178**

Adams: *The Chairman Dances; Harmonielehre; more. Rattle cond. (EMI Classics)* **485-573**

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Berlioz: *Messe Solennelle. Monteverdi Choir; John E. Gardiner cond. (Philips)* **478-917**

J.S. Bach: *Suites For Orchestra. Hogwood cond. (L'oiseau Lyre)* **476-952/396-952**

Cecilia Bartoli—*Rossini: La Cenerentola (London)* **469-098/399-097**

Maria Callas—*La Divina (EMI Classics)* **467-480**

Simon Rattle—*Prokofiev: Symphony No.5, Scythian Suite (EMI Classics)* **467-209**

Anne-Sophie Mutter—*Mozart: Violin Concerto No.1 In B Flat (EMI Classics)* **434-209**

Enya—*Watermark (Reprise)* **431-403**

Sibelius: *Valse Triste; Sym. No. 2; Swan Of Tuonela. Jansons cond. (EMI Classics)* **464-958**

Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman—*Bach: Violin Concertos No. 1, 2; etc. (EMI Classics)* **464-735**

Itzhak Perlman—*Brahms: Violin Concerto. Barenboim, Berlin Phil. (EMI Classics)* **459-842**

Fauré: *Piano Quartets. Ax, Stern, Laredo, Ma. (Sony Class.)* **458-554**

Maxim Vengerov—*Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn: Violin Concertos (Teldec)* **453-969**

Mischa Maisky—*Schubert: Songs Without Words; Arpeggione Sonata (DG)* **166-728**

Roger Norrington—*Rossini: Overtures; London Class. Players (EMI Classics)* **420-521**

Mozart: *Syms. 39 & 41, "Jupiter." Norrington, London Class. Players. (EMI Classics)* **420-513**

Roger Norrington—*Early Romantic Overtures (EMI Classics)* **406-090**

Sarah Chang, Violin—*Debut (EMI Classics)* **448-431**

Handel: *Water Music, Marriner cond., ASMF (EMI Classics)* **401-638**

Billy McLaughlin—*Fingerdance (Narada)* **168-997**

Rossini's Ghost—*Various Artists (Sony Class.)* **167-528**

Samuel Ramey—*Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye (Sony Class.)* **167-510**

Guitar Fingerstyle—*Various Artists (Narada)* **167-346**

The Boston Pops Orchestra—*Runnin' Wild. Keith Lockhart cond. (RCA Victor)* **166-652**

Julianne Baird—*Handel Arias (Newport Classic)* **165-266**

Pangea *(eastwest World)* **161-901**

Renee Fleming—*Strauss: Four Last Songs; Rosenkavalier Suite; etc. (RCA Victor)* **165-233**

Peter Schreier, Andras Schiff—*Schubert: Die Schöne Müllerin (London)* **165-225**

Quartetto Italiano—*Schubert: Quartets Nos. 12,13,14,15 (Philips)* **165-217/395-210**

David Lanz—*Sacred Road (Narada)* **165-183**

Beethoven: *Piano Sonatas, Op.10. Alfred Brendel (Philips)* **163-980**

L'Archibudelli—*Brahms: String Sextets (Sony Class.)* **163-600**

Stravinsky: *The Rake's Progress. Nagano, Upshaw, Hadley, Ramey (Erato)* **162-420/392-423**

Placido Domingo—*Bajo El Cielo Espanol (Sony Class.)* **160-648**

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Schubert: *Octet. Mozzafiato and L'Archibudelli (Vivarte)* **156-281**

John Williams and The Boston Pops—*Summon The Heroes; Official Theme Of The '96 Olympics; Vangelis, more. (Sony Class.)* **156-273**

Bartok: *The Miraculous Mandarin; Music For Strings, Percussion And Celesta. Pierre Boulez cond. (DG)* **154-658**

Beethoven: *Piano Con. Nos. 3 & 4. Mitsuko Uchida, piano (Philips)* **154-633**

Goldenthal: *Fire, Water, Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio. Carl St. Clair cond. (Sony Class.)* **154-559**

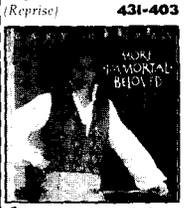
Secret Garden—*Songs From A Secret Garden (Philips)* **154-021**

Victoria: *Requiem. Paul McCreesh cond. (Archiv)* **152-058**

Glenn Gould—*Bach: Partitas BWV 825-830; Preludes and Fugues (Sony Classical)* **150-250/390-252**

Prokofiev: *Romeo & Juliet (scenes from the ballet). M. T. Thomas (RCA Red Seal)* **149-070**

R. Strauss—*Sonatinen. Orpheus Chamber Orch. (DG)* **148-353**



More "Immortal Beloved"—*Orig. Sndtrk. (music of Beethoven) (Sony Class.)* **167-304**

Bryn Terfel Sings Rodgers & Hammerstein—*Something Wonderful (DG)* **166-710**

Out Classics—*music by Barber, Bernstein, Chopin, Schubert, more. (RCA Red Seal)* **166-660**

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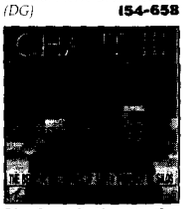

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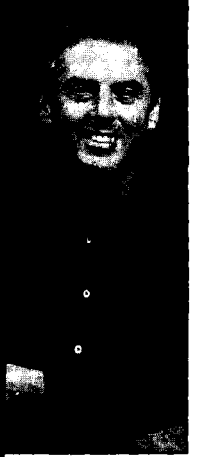

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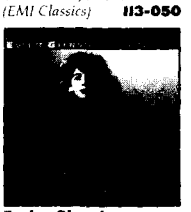

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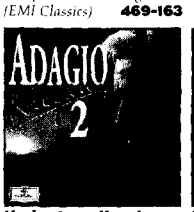

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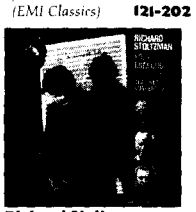

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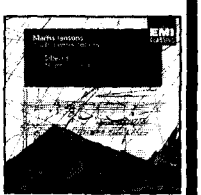

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frey praised him as a man of "absolute, unquestioned integrity." Far worse, American officials had used the visit to provide Gutiérrez with their latest intelligence on Mexico's drug traffickers, possibly endangering informants. White House officials are still fuming that the Mexican government allowed Gutiérrez to visit Washington and receive this information—twelve days after the Mexicans began to suspect that Gutiérrez was bent.

The embarrassment (and danger to DEA agents and informants in Mexico) probably could have been avoided. According to a former American counter-narcotics official, there is reason to believe that a department within the DEA had some indication that Gutiérrez had "a history of associations with drug traffickers," but this information was never developed and passed on to policymakers. "There was a disconnect," the official said. "The people who needed to know were not informed." James J. McGivney, a spokesman for the DEA, says there were no suspicions about Gutiérrez before the charges were announced. "It's not our job to vet these people," he says. "We don't go around spooking military and government officials; we've got enough to do with the crooks." He did not mention that Gutiérrez appears to have been one and the same.

As it happened, the arrest of Gutiérrez came at the moment the U.S. government was readying its annual "certification" that Mexico is cooperating with efforts to stop drugs from entering this country. The annual narcotics certification process is outlined in the Foreign Assistance Act and requires the president to identify countries that produce and export drugs and then to determine whether or not their governments are making progress in stemming the export of drugs to the United States. If a nation is decertified for lack of cooperation, counter-narcotics aid continues, but the nation loses most other assistance. The president, though, can grant a "vital national interest" waiver to a country that fails to meet expectations. This qualifies as decertification but with an exception that allows the country to still receive aid.

With the arrest of Gutiérrez, the awkwardness that has been obvious for years in recertifying Mexico became excruciating. Should the Clinton administration approve $25 to $62 million in foreign aid this year to a country whose chief anti-narcotics cop was allegedly facilitating the transport of narcotics into the United States?

The White House seemed at first inclined to dismiss the question. President Clinton said he found the Gutiérrez scandal "deeply troubling," then characteristically praised the Mexican government for making the arrest. But, as the story stayed on the front page into the week in which the administration had to decide on certification, the tone changed. On February 25, while the Mexican government was frantically signaling better intentions by dismissing dozens of suspect INCD employees, Thomas Constantine, head of the DEA, was testifying to Congress that there is not a single Mexican law enforcement agency that the DEA fully trusts. With the president's decision on certification only two days away, *The New York Times* reported on its front page that the White House was for the first time seriously considering some form of decertification for Mexico.

This, though, was sound and fury orchestrated by the White House, and it signified not much beyond positioning. "I don't care what was in the *Times* today," said a senior White House official that afternoon. "We are going to end up with certification, and there is not going to be any ifs, ands or buts about it. Fully decertifying Mexico is not an option. It is not on the table. I'm not even sure if decertification with a waiver is on the table." Despite the presence for the first time of voices within the White House itself—and not just from the DEA—arguing for decertification, the official said the administration would satisfy itself with "some very stiff messages delivered to the Mexicans about their performance" and recertify on the grounds that, as usual, progress was being made.

The Gutiérrez scandal illustrates how deeply corruption from drug trafficking has burrowed into Mexican society, infiltrating and subverting government at all levels, and of how determinedly the Clinton administration has declined to publicly deal with it. Prior to last week, the Mexican military was thought to be the one arm of the state relatively untainted by drug corruption, at least in its upper reaches. The shock of Gutiérrez has destroyed that false sense of comfort. The corruption is cloaked in layers of deception; crooked law enforcement officials commonly use their jobs as cover, building their reputations as lawmen and patriots through carefully chosen and staged busts.

In early January, for instance, General Gutiérrez ordered a raid on a party that Amado Carillo Fuentes was attending in the state of Sinaloa. Three hundred troops wound up crashing the wedding reception of Carillo's sister in an effort to catch her brother—who had been tipped off and had already left. This very public attempt to capture Carillo is only one of three showy tries Gutiérrez claimed to have made to bring in Carillo. The deceptions practiced by Mexican officials like Gutiérrez have found an easy mark in the Clinton White House. In the past several years, as America's neighbor has become America's biggest narcotics menace, President Clinton has avoided all criticism of Mexico, indeed nearly all mention. Clinton's praise of Ernesto Zedillo's government last week for catching Gutiérrez was the first time in sixteen months the president has spoken publicly about drugs and Mexico. The president's determination to ignore evidence to the contrary has been impressive. In October 1995, the last time he spoke of drugs and Mexico, Clinton praised President Zedillo's "major reform of Mexican law enforcement." But, six months later, the State Department concluded in its annual narcotics report that Mexico's "endemic corruption continued to undermine both policy initiatives and law enforcement operations." Nevertheless, Clinton certified Mexico to receive foreign aid in 1996.

The poet and essayist Octavio Paz wrote that the gulli-

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bility of Americans (including, presumably, American officials) is partly a matter of cultural difference. Mexico, Paz said, is a country of masks. "The Mexican tells lies because he delights in fantasy, or because he is desperate, or because he wants to rise above the sordid facts of his life; the North American does not tell lies," he wrote. "The North Americans are credulous."

Credulous, and also sensitive. Mexico, understandably touchy about infractions against its sovereignty from the north, is deeply ambivalent about U.S. assistance and easily irritated by criticism. Shocking as it may be, one reason President Clinton shies away from pointing out the Mexican government's failure to police its borders with the U.S. is that he doesn't want to hurt its feelings. "We're mindful of their sensitivity to overreaching by the United States, and we're trying not to inflame it," one White House official explained.

But cultural differences and exquisite manners are not the entire, or even the primary, reason for the administration's blind eye. That, it appears, would be money. In an administration devoted to trade above all, the truth about Mexico is unwelcome. Decertifying Mexico would not only stop U.S. aid to the country, straining relations badly, but it would also undermine the entire idea of free trade with Mexico, an idea embodied in one of the Clinton administration's greatest triumphs, the North American Free Trade Agreement. An admission that Mexico has become the major exporter of drugs into the U.S. raises questions of trade in general with Mexico. Mexico, which fears it would become a pariah were it decertified by the U.S., has lobbied hard against even contemplating the move. The president has complied. In 1995, he argued that Mexican drug traffic proved the need for *more* trade with Mexico: "The stronger our trade, the greater the well-being of all our people, the deeper our cooperation, the better we will be able to fight together our common problems like drugs and crime and pollution," he said. "It's mind-boggling that Mexico gets away with this," says Phil Jordan, a former head of the El Paso Intelligence Center for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. "But, historically, they always have."

Over the last four years, with the help of corrupt Mexican officials and myopic American officials, Mexico has become a narcotics superhighway to the United States, delivering more methamphetamine, cocaine and marijuana to this country than any other nation. As the Mexican cartels have gained more and more of the American market, they have grown bolder in their attempts to expand. Formerly quiet, mundane trading towns like Eagle Pass, Texas, have become part of the narcotics interstate.

"They cross the river at dusk and wait for night before they move out," says Ramiro Treviño, a supervisor for the U.S. Border Patrol. High on a rocky cliff above the Rio Grande, he searches the river with binoculars; "I've seen them backpack marijuana ten to fifteen miles." Treviño was raised on the border, and he can read the footprints he finds in the powdery brown soil like signs on a highway. He can tell the difference between illegal aliens and marijuana smugglers, at a glance, by the depth of their tracks. "Looks like we had some backpackers here," he says, pointing to a brigade of deep boot prints, sunk hard into the soil by up to a hundred pounds of marijuana. "Dopers," as Treviño calls them, pack the bulky marijuana into a home trash compactor to maximize their loads.

Every night, as darkness falls across the Rio Grande, the same game of chase and chance begins. Sensors planted by the Border Patrol electronically map the foot traffic. A night-vision camera stationed on a ridge above the river tracks the emerging backpackers. The packers, having no idea they've been spotted, alternately crouch and dart among the foliage. Using only their radios and the moonlight, the agents guide one another to their targets. One year ago, Senior Agent Jefferson Barr was closing in on four smugglers who were seen by the night-vision camera dumping loads of marijuana over a fence. Barr and his partner met two of them head-on. There was a struggle. Shots went off. "This is where Jeff was killed," Treviño says quietly, standing before a wooden cross, in a clearing just a few hundred yards from the Rio Grande. Five hundred pounds of marijuana were seized from the pasture where Barr was killed.

Barr's death was an example of the growing willingness of the Mexican dope traders to use violence against U.S. law enforcement officials. In 1995, there were no recorded assaults against U.S. Border Patrol agents in the Del Rio sector. In 1996, there were more than fifty. There is everywhere in the region a sense of immediate danger. Ranchers who live on rambling acreages, miles from civilization, feel failed by law enforcement they thought could protect them. An elderly rancher, whose house has been fired at, says, "We have no faith in our government, whatsoever," to restore order along the border. The rancher won't give his name because he worries about retaliation from the dope dealers on this side. "They know where we live, and my wife and I aren't safe," he says.

Bud Natus, a rancher who manages 2,200 acres of land, recalls the time he surprised smugglers on what he calls "the combat zone," the pasture land along the river. One smuggler "was holding a rifle and told me he was gonna kill me," Natus says. At 6'3", and 250 pounds, Natus is not easily intimidated. But he now carries an assault rife, a shot gun and a 45-automatic in his pickup truck whenever he goes near the river. "You never know who's gonna be lying in the weeds waiting for you, so you best be careful," he warns. As soon as his brother-in-law sells the land, Natus will move away. Driving along county road 1021, south of Eagle Pass, it seems like every other place is up for sale. Families are giving up and moving out because they feel so threatened by the tons of drugs being smuggled in and the violence that accompanies that passage. "It's ruining our way of life," says Natus. "This isn't America anymore; this is Mexico," says another rancher. Law enforcement officials worry the land up for sale will be

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bought by smugglers who will use it as private import-export centers.

A visit to a Federal Judicial Police unit in Ciudad Juárez shows how underequipped and undermotivated some Mexican law enforcement agents are. The unit is the sole force in this city charged with counter-narcotics operations. At one o'clock in the morning, at a dusty roadblock outside the city, a group of agents are stopping every vehicle, fifty an hour, searching for drugs. A policewoman paws through the bags of sleepy tourists aboard a bus from the south, while a policeman unleashes a drug-sniffing dog around a line of trucks. The agents aren't carrying radios, and their chief sleuth, the sniffer dog, is tired and dragging. He is one of only two dogs used for the 123 checkpoints throughout the state of Chihuahua.

No drugs are found on this piercingly cold morning, but Commander Socrates Herrera is very proud that his agents are at least looking. Herrera, head of the Federal Judicial Police in Juárez, says his people are often offered bribes by truckers at the roadblocks. He admits that men have tried to buy him at the office after first knocking politely on the gate of his headquarters. "People have offered us a million dollars," he says. They were turned down, he says proudly.

But, when Herrera is asked if the men who offered the million-dollar bribes were arrested, he says, "No, because they didn't have the money right there." This turns out to be indicative of his approach. Herrera knows all about drugs in Juárez. Driving through the city, he points out *picaderos*, private galleries for buying and shooting heroin. Asked why he doesn't shut them down, he says, "It's not our jurisdiction." That would be up to the local police.

In fact, there is a widespread belief among the jaded and ill-served citizens of Juárez that neither police force can afford to close the *picaderos*; it would cost them too much of the bribery income for which they compete. As Mexico's anti-drug units are currently structured, it would seem impossible to escape corruption. New recruits undergo six months of training with the army, then they're put out on the street, often stationed far from their families in spartan conditions: in bungalows with little furniture, or in barracks with bunk beds. Starting pay is $6,000 a year.

In this environment, the police are expected to resist a combination of deadly threats and bribes that can run to hundreds of thousands of dollars. "It's kind of like this," says Robert Nieves, a former chief of International Operations for the DEA. "You're offered a bribe. If bribery doesn't work, you're offered violence. And that violence will be exacted against you or your family members." In Mexico, the choice is called "*plata o plomo*," silver or lead.

The result is a breathtaking level of corruption. Twenty-eight percent of Mexico's federal law enforcement has been fired for corruption in the last three years. In the last year alone, the federal government has fired more than 900 Federal Judicial Police for suspected offenses that included theft, extortion, guarding drug shipments—and even murder. The Clinton administration applauded the firings because, according to a White House official, it showed "the Mexicans realize there's a problem, and they are working toward change, which is a long way from where they were two years ago." But everyone involved in the effort against the Mexican drug trade says there remains massive corruption. One DEA agent whom I asked about corruption in Mexican law enforcement pulled out a thick file full, he said, of information about commanders still in power who are suspected by the U.S. of facilitating the transport of drugs into this country. Former Mexican Attorney General Antonio Lozano has estimated it would take fifteen years for Mexico's law enforcement to be completely cleansed of corruption.

Increased trade with Mexico cannot in and of itself end the drug traffic. The reason—a reason that the Clinton administration has yet to acknowledge—is that Mexico's drug corruption is so pervasive that legitimate trade with Mexico is inextricably entangled with it. Because legitimate Mexican businesses launder drug money, and because so many apparently legitimate Mexican businessmen and politicians are secretly involved in the drug trade, "you sometimes have U.S. Embassy personnel [in Mexico] negotiating trade deals with a person who is also facilitating major drug trafficking into the U.S.," as one senior American law enforcement official told me. Pushing trade with some politicians and business leaders may only augment the influence of those who are aiding the drug runners.

And because a healthy portion of Mexico's economy already depends on the illegal narcotics trade ($27 to $30 billion, according to the Justice Department) drug money fuels industries and distorts competition. It is not an equal trade partnership when American business people are "competing against enterprises that have extraordinary access to illegal capital," says Lupsha. "Clinton does not fully realize that it will be unfair for any American trying to do business in Mexico with this level of systemic corruption."

During President Clinton's visit in April, Mexico will be pushing for free truck passage across our border, a provision of NAFTA that was postponed indefinitely by the U.S. mainly because of safety concerns. In turn, Clinton will celebrate the expansion of trade with Mexico as a boon to the American economy, even though Mexico exported $10 billion more in goods to the U.S. last year than the U.S. did to Mexico. What he should do is take the opportunity to point out that, at the time the U.S. opened its borders, the drug traffickers rushed in. Now the U.S. is running a remarkable deficit with Mexico, not only in legitimate trade, but in the American lives being lost in the consumption of drugs delivered by the relentless drive of the cartels down a stretch of highway that is protected by some of Mexico's finest law enforcement. •

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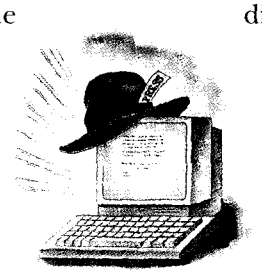
BLOOD AND SAND

By Dana Calvo

On January 3, at about 10:30 p.m., Hodín Gutiérrez Rico, a 28-year-old prosecutor assigned to the Tijuana branch of the state attorney general's office, returned home from a night out. As his wife walked their 8-year-old daughter up the stairs to their apartment, Gutiérrez pulled the family car around to the garage. A group of gunmen armed with Kalashnikovs and Uzis were waiting for him. Gutiérrez was shot 120 times. Then, the assailants got in their van and drove back and forth several times over his mangled body.

Gutiérrez was the eighth prosecutor or police commander from Tijuana to be murdered in eleven months. No suspects have been charged in any of the killings. All of the victims had headed drug investigations in Baja California, a Mexican state that abuts California and is home to the Tijuana-based Arellano Félix drug organization. Gutiérrez knew of the danger. For months, he received telephoned death threats that warned him to stay away from drug-related cases. But he declined to back down from the drug traffickers, and his ambition proved fatal.



There are several theories about why the drug lords of Tijuana have taken to killing law enforcement officials so brazenly. Some suggest the killings were the Arellanos' way of ensuring that certain investigations remained stalled. Others believe they are due to internecine warfare between good cops and bad cops—cops, that is, on the drug traffickers' payroll. Since General Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo, the head of Mexico's National Institute to Combat Drugs, resigned on February 6, and was later jailed under suspicion that he had been doing business with a powerful drug lord, the latter scenario has been looking more and more likely.

One thing, at any rate, is clear: waging the drug war in Tijuana isn't going to earn anybody a long and healthy life. Consider the following cases, all of which preceded the Gutiérrez hit:

February 23, 1996: Sergio Armando Silva Moreno, former operations chief of the Baja California federal police, was gunned down in Mexico City.

April 17: José Arturo Ochoa Palacios, former federal chief prosecutor of Tijuana, was fatally shot at a recreation center during his morning jog.

May 18: The bodies of Baja's former top prosecutor, Sergio Moreno Pérez, and his son were found in a car in a Mexico City suburb; both had been shot and showed signs of torture.

July 19: Isaac Sanchez Pérez, former Baja federal police commander, was assassinated in Mexico City.

August 17: Federal prosecutor Jesús Romero Magaña was shot to death in front of his home.

September 14: Ernesto Ibarra Santés, the federal police commander for Baja California, was killed while on a trip to Mexico City. He had served at his post for all of twenty-nine days and, according to interviews prior to his slaying, was planning to reveal the activities of twenty to twenty-five "junior" drug gangs operating in Tijuana.

September 22: Jorge García Vargas, Tijuana's district chief of the federal anti-narcotics agency, was found dead in a Mexico City suburb. He had served as chief for less than a year.

Last fall, U.S. officials from the Department of State and the Drug Enforcement Administration confirmed the rather obvious fact that the killings were drug-related. Although eight murders remain unsolved, these officials refused to criticize Mexican investigative techniques. Indeed, despite drug gangs controlling a city on the U.S. border with such impunity that they feel free to murder eight law enforcement officials in the course of a year, U.S. officials from President Clinton down said almost nothing. After Gutiérrez's murder, a high-ranking U.S. official familiar with Latin America said, on condition of anonymity, that the United States would like to see Mexico make "some good strong captures and indictments of drug traffickers." But, the official conceded, "the capability to carry them out remains lacking." Only in the past week, in the wake of the extraordinary allegations about General Gutiérrez, has the U.S. shown any inclination to speak out against the corruption and incompetence that pervade Mexico's anti-drug effort.

No one knows the full extent of the Arellano family's drug organization, but authorities on both sides of the

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border say it controls nearly all drug-related business in Baja California. U.S. officials estimate that 70 percent of the illegal drugs flowing into the United States come from Mexico, and Baja is a favored route for their delivery.

This February, U.S. authorities unsealed testimony from an Arellano henchman (a lieutenant in the security detail of former President Carlos Salinas de Gortari) taken in extradition proceedings for two countrymen currently held in a San Diego jail. He painted a picture of corruption so thorough and tentacular that it involved law enforcement officials at every level. Under oath, the man said that legions of officials in Tijuana have been bought and that these officials help the Arellanos fly in drugs from Colombia, tipping them off to reform-minded prosecutors and waving their drug shipments through immigration checkpoints. The former lieutenant said he had personally transported firearms used in the assassination of Ernesto Ibarra Santés, September 14's victim.

After Ibarra was killed, Mexico's then-Attorney General Antonio Lozano Gracia eulogized him as "truly brave," saying he had "confronted concretely the Arellano Félix organization with all of [his] resources." But such tributes have done little to expedite the investigation of Ibarra's or any of the other drug-related murders. Months later, Mexico City officials refuse to comment on the ongoing probes, and federal authorities in Tijuana are just as tight-lipped, deflecting all inquiries back to Mexico City.

While notably unsuccessful in prosecuting drug lords, Mexico's government has for years pursued a skillful public relations campaign aimed at convincing the United States that battling the drug lords is its highest priority. At this time last year, President Clinton faced the annual deadline on whether to certify Mexico as making a good faith effort to root out drug traffickers (a decision on which millions in U.S. and foreign aid depends). Just before dawn on the day of the decision, planeloads of soldiers from Mexico City touched down in Tijuana with the formidable assignment of finding and apprehending the Arellano brothers. Military vehicles rolled past spacious homes in Tijuana's more upscale neighborhoods. A group of soldiers who had straggled away from their comrades wiped sleep from their eyes and asked fruit vendors for free pineapple wedges. Down the street, about twenty-five soldiers shot at the doorway of a house they thought might be protecting the legendary brothers. By mid-afternoon, Mexican radio was reporting that Clinton, who may or may not have seen television footage of the military operation, had approved the certification. The Arellanos had not been arrested. The soldiers flew back to Mexico City.

Before the arrest of General Gutiérrez, Mexico's anti-drug effort was as corrupt as those of southern neighbors like Colombia. But its image in American media and government circles was slightly better. Now, with General Gutiérrez's arrest, Americans are beginning to grasp how much power the drug lords wield within Mexico's law enforcement system. It is true that the Mexican military is playing an increasingly active role in fighting drug traffickers across the country, even using military jets for drug interdiction. Last month, for instance, the federal prosecutor for Baja California, who oversees the federal police, was removed from his post on orders from Mexico City and replaced by an army general. On February 21, nine days before this year's certification deadline, the entire federal police force of Baja California—eighty-seven agents—was replaced by forty-six young soldiers. They joined a contingent of forty-seven other soldiers who had been sent a few weeks earlier. But, after the allegations against General Gutiérrez, few in Washington (or in Mexico, for that matter) believe anymore that increased use of military means increased honesty and diligence.

Meanwhile, in Tijuana itself, some residents are considering desperate measures. Last fall, Tijuana Chief Coroner Gustavo Salazar Fernandez co-authored a proposal to ratify the death penalty in Baja California, legislation that he says would remove hired assassins from the city's sprawling streets. An assassin "is not going to return if we kill him—kill him legally, that is," he said.

As Tijuana spins chaotically outside his office, Salazar speaks in clipped sentences and exudes determination. A reserve Mexican Air Force pilot who flies three times a week, he knows his proposal will not reach the root of Tijuana's drug trafficking and corrupt police problem. He doesn't even want it to. Drugs, economics, politics—those are not his business. Salazar is focused on one thing: reducing the number of bullet-ridden bodies being carried up the steps to the autopsy room. "I have nothing personal against anyone," he said the moment the Arellanos were mentioned. "The violence must stop."

The Baja Congress has briefly reviewed Salazar's death penalty proposal but will not vote on it for some time, according to Javier Castañeda, a congressman representing coastal areas south of Tijuana. Although the death penalty has been ratified in at least two other states, Castañeda is sure it will not become law in Tijuana.

Antonio García Sánchez, the head of Baja California's Commission on Human Rights, notes despondently that "The narcotraffickers—the mafia—they haven't been arrested yet. That's because there are other mechanisms in the government that have blocked justice. You think the death penalty is going to stop that?" Castañeda calls Salazar's suggestion "a proposal of desperation." But desperation is the mood of the day in Tijuana. And in Washington, too, where President Clinton's policy of backing Mexico's anti-drug campaign lies in ruin.

DANA CALVO is a reporter for The Associated Press.

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UNORTHODOX

By Gershom Gorenberg

I sat in the Duck Café on Tel Aviv's Sheinkin Street, waiting to meet Gil Kopatch and feeling acutely aware of the skullcap that marked me as the only Orthodox Jew in the establishment. Campy paintings of cartoon heroes and posters of half-dressed women hung on the walls; blurred rock music from the stereo mixed with small talk; the menu offered me bacon. On Sheinkin, the gentrified strip of boutiques and coffee shops that stands for bohemia, secularism and fashionable leftism in Israel, I was in foreign territory.

It had been six months since I last came down the hill from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv; that time I visited the editor of a Hebrew paper I wrote for, who introduced me around the office as "Gershom, who's enlightened Orthodox"—an unthinking insult of the same species as "Meet Leroy, a smart Negro." Yitzhak Rabin's assassination by a religious fanatic had already stoked Israel's long-running culture war between secularists and Orthodox. Since then, elections that boosted the power of clerical parties have only made the battle more vicious. As portrayed by Israeli politicians and pundits, secularists regard Judaism as oppressive and belief in God as benighted. They claim title to peace, democracy and Rabin's memory; belong to the materialist West; and are sexually liberated (or dissolute, depending on camera angle). The Orthodox support theocracy, prefer West Bank tombs to peace and are idealists (or fanatics, again depending on angle). Tel Aviv is secular, Jerusalem religious. By those definitions, a dovish, liberal Orthodox Jerusalemite—like me—doesn't exist.

Nor, I suspected, did Gil Kopatch. Yet a few hours earlier I'd listened to a radio replay of the 27-year-old comedian's fabulously successful Bible lesson, which airs first on Friday night television (secular space, since Orthodox Jews don't watch TV on the Sabbath). Kopatch discusses the weekly Torah portion, the biblical chapters that will be read on Saturday morning in synagogue. A recent week's broadcast was about Jacob's blessings to his sons at the end of Genesis.

Kopatch: "So Jacob takes the attendance list, and starts reading out names. 'Reuben!' 'Present.' 'Reuben, thou art my firstborn ... unstable as water, thou shalt not excel, because thou wentest up to thy father's bed.' "

The emcee (as straight man): "Jacob still remembers that Reuben slept with Bilhah, Jacob's own concubine."

Kopatch (momentarily in a teacher's tone): "Reuben, in fact, blew it, so Jacob tells him, 'You're the first-born. It's true you should get to be the leader, but, because you're impulsive and horny, no way.' "

"In other words," voice louder, taking direct aim at Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu, "there's no room in Israel for leaders who fuck around on the side. Jacob said that, not me. Censor the Bible, for all I care."

More digs at Bibi and censorship—and at West Bank settlers, lawyers and gay-bashing Israeli President Ezer Weizman—followed. Kopatch has reason to be sensitive about free-speech issues. In one early TV routine, he described the drunken Noah, after the Flood, as "dancing in his tent with his dick out"; in another, he explained God's commandment to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a punishment for the patriarch's expulsion from his tent of Ishmael, archetypal father of the Arabs.

And his slang-saturated exegesis of Genesis 23—in which Abraham buys the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron to bury his wife, Sarah—turns religious-politics-as-usual inside out. For the right, that chapter is the Jewish deed to Hebron; for the left, an irrelevancy. Kopatch, on the air, agrees that "the Cave of Machpelah belongs to us." But then comes the twist: "Now just who is 'us'? ... It's written, 'and Abraham died, and his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the Cave of Machpelah.' Ishmael is back in town! A comeback!" The cave, he concludes, belongs to both brothers, Jews and Arabs alike.

For the ultra-Orthodox, Kopatch—appearing on air in a backwards cap and peering through oversized glasses at sacred tomes—has come to epitomize secular loathing for all that is holy. Knesset member Shlomo Benizri of the Shas Party, a key piece of Netanyahu's coalition, has threatened to bring down the government if Kopatch doesn't lose his spot on the state-owned Channel 1. In mourning after hearing

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the comic, another ultra-Orthodox pol said, "I have to rend my garments." In turn, Yossi Sarid, leader of the stridently secularist Meretz Party, defended Kopatch before the Knesset plenum, assuring the legislators that, indeed, "Noah had a dick."

Sarid was defending not only freedom of speech, but secularism over religion. As political scientist Yaron Ezrahi notes, "The Israeli secular community lacks the understanding that you don't have to secularize individual identity to evolve a secular state." So atheism and liberalism are equated, and the attack on religious coercion often becomes an attack on belief and believers, as such.

But, when the Knesset Education Committee called Kopatch to testify, he flustered secularist supporters by insisting, between jokes, that "I'm a believing Jew" and expressing "love of Torah." One prominent secular columnist, incapable of accepting the remarks at face value, compared Kopatch's professed religious belief to Bertolt Brecht telling the House Un-American Activities Committee that he wasn't a Red.

At the Duck Café, I was nursing a Coke, the only thing on the menu I knew was kosher, when Kopatch arrived. A stocking cap covered his hair. He had a thin face, a bit of beard on his chin and pale, searching eyes. He ordered a whisky and a cup of tea and began talking quietly.

The bio he recited was typical of a son of the comfortable class, the most secular slice of Israeli society: grandparents from Eastern Europe, childhood in a Tel Aviv suburb, "high school that, like, was kind of snobby." As a child, he postured as a "Canaanite"—a name once used by those who reject all ties to the Jewish past. "I used to argue with my grandfather, tell him: 'Hey, when I have a kid, I won't circumcise him. I'm an *Israeli*.' "

Three years ago, he "got loose" of his old attitude toward Judaism. "I was in a real crisis, depression," he said, gulping his words bashfully. Meanwhile, some friends had found Orthodoxy. "I said, 'I'll study so I can make digs at them.' So I started reading."

There's a standard Israeli script for this, too: the lost secularist begins taking classes with rabbis who specialize in "returners" to faith; within months he is strictly following religious law, answers "How are you?" with "Thank God" and has become as conventionally Orthodox as he once was irreligious.

So far, at least, Kopatch has rejected the script. "I love to study, to absorb, internalize, like, take it in on my own, without anyone else.... I know that next to a yeshiva student my age I'm a dilettante, but I've got good gray matter." That independence, he said, puts the ultra-Orthodox in a panic: "Knowledge is power. They want to keep it for themselves. I say it's mine, too. It's written in Hebrew. I read Hebrew."

The same attitude goes for observing religious law, seen as a package deal in Orthodoxy: "I go by the thesis that you should keep whatever commandments do you good.... The commandments are a gift. If you do them out of fear, it's worthless. If [the Orthodox] saw me get up at 11 to say the early morning prayers, they'd be in shock. It's a very inward thing. No one outside of you can mediate between you and God."

For an American, such individualism would be unremarkable. But Israel has no tradition of personalized religion, no roots in the Reformation's "priesthood of all believers." In practice, both secularists and Orthodox identify real religion as what the rabbis say, not what the heart does. Kopatch, I decided, is a Protestant. By the same analogy, I'm a dissenting Catholic, just inside the historic collective of the synagogue. Not the same, but I felt a rebel's camaraderie.

Established religion, he told me, is tainted: "Wherever I see a rabbi, I smell politics under the table." The view is common, and, for most Israelis from Kopatch's background, it ends discussion. Yet Kopatch had a *mikra'ot gedolot*, the Torah printed with medieval commentaries, in his shoulder bag. Arguing that "people mix up religion and the religious establishment," he challenges both orthodoxies, religious and secular.

That, for me, is what makes Kopatch worth the price of admission: it is not simply that he is in the middle, but that he asserts the right to his own exegesis. In the Israeli public arena, moderation has come to mean opportunism: a secular political candidate dons a skullcap to visit an influential rabbi, promises a ban on pork imports and begs for an endorsement. The National Religious Party, a generation ago the upholder of moderate Orthodoxy, now conflates scripture with a bitter brand of nationalism.

None of this has much to do with the Judaism I try to live and teach my children, in which the Bible demands the pursuit of peace, in which a tradition of learning teaches intellectual openness and irony. But Orthodox Jews like me have become an almost invisible minority in Israel. Those liberals who made it through yeshiva and became rabbis (I walked out one day after a theological argument with my Talmud teacher and never went back) rarely have positions of religious leadership; they get written off as curiosities by the secularists, Uncle Toms by the Orthodox mainstream. Daily, I see the grim scowl that Judaism wears in public and remind myself that it's a mask.

One entertainer, certainly, won't be enough to overturn ingrained perceptions of religion. But, when Gil Kopatch began the Friday night Torah-portion routine, the boyish comedian stuck in the country's face the possibility of an authentic Judaism outside the party lines of both sides. I asked him what he was planning for the next week's portion, and he pulled out his book and read from Exodus, and we talked about how Moses had organized the building workers of Egypt. In the Duck Café, on Sheinkin Street in Tel Aviv, in violation of the culture war's rules of engagement, we studied Torah.

GERSHOM GORENBERG is op-ed editor of *The Jerusalem Report*.

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A divided court schemes against its king.

THE MADNESS OF SPEAKER NEWT

By Hanna Rosin

> I am the King. I cannot rest. I must rule. Half the day is gone already.
>
> —the celluloid King George III, as he goes mad

There are always signs that a reign is ending, and they are usually spotted not in the king himself but in his court. In the inner circle, latent jealousies between advisers spill into open conflict, as they angrily debate who is to blame for the calamity, chewing over each other's past errors and pointing the finger at old and nascent enemies. Next, the parliament crumbles. The ingrained habits of reverence toward the great one—the averted eyes, the bowed head, the devotion to every word as received truth—break down. The subjects no longer regard the king as divine; they begin to speak of him as if he is all too human: one of them, perhaps not even much of an example of one of them. They hang on his every word for an altogether different reason now: to spot the next stumble, record the growing list of regal follies and delusions. Among the strongest, a naked ambition blazes, a wish, unseemly in its desire, to succeed the dying One, a wish barely tempered by lingering loyalty. Hopefuls scheme, cabals form. Amid all this, the king himself is absent, retreated to some protective space, some refuge in his mind.

In the reign of Newt Gingrich, all the signs are there. Two circles of advisers are gripped by a frenzy of recriminations. The old crew of friends from Gingrich's early visionary days is blaming a new inner circle for leading their prophet astray. They've fingered a villain—Gingrich's closest adviser, Joe Gaylord—as the Rasputin who has bewitched the wayward speaker. Gaylord's people—the pollsters and consultants he's hired—chalk it up to jealousy.

Meanwhile, the once buoyant Republican majority in the House has grown listless and bereft, lost without their guiding star. The revolutionaries of the 104th Congress, now sadly diminished as the seat-holders of the 105th, wander aimlessly from vote to vote—and with every vote just a few too many defect. Into this void on the Hill has seeped an edgy impatience for something—anything would be fine—that will resolve the speaker's fate. The prognoses range from brazen pronouncements of the speaker's downfall to nervous support. Conservatives have been losing faith for months, at least since Gingrich's unmanly crying during the budget deal. "His only circle is himself," grumbles one. Now moderates, his last remaining friends, are fading, too.

Many urban Republicans and other moderates were ostracized for failing to line up behind Gingrich before his re-election as speaker and for speaking against him during the ethics investigation. Now they are gleeful at his demise. "Basically, Newt right now is not a factor," says one such happy apostate. "It's like he has an honorary title. You don't find Republicans talking about him. People aren't scared of him or trying to impress him or even feeling sorry for him. It's like he's just not there."

What were once seen as the telltale marks of an erratic genius—the speaker's occasional bursting into tears, his open hydrant of millennial gushings, his flirtations with cuddly animals—are now, increasingly and increasingly openly, seen as the symptoms of a corrupted mind: "He used to have grand visions," says one dispirited colleague. "Now all he has is ranting and raving, vacuum tubes and ice buckets and squealing pigs."

Others are still supportive, but the shakiness shows through. "He is the speaker, and I don't see any point in trying to change that fact," says Connecticut Representative Chris Shays, one of Gingrich's more moderate defenders. "I don't feel his speakership is in danger. Why, do you hear anything different?" Even among the speaker's earnest supporters, the vocabulary has changed. They mean to defend him, to prove that he is still his old warrior self, but all they can come up with is the language of recovery. "Mentally, he's still all there," says one member of leadership. "Emotionally, he's still holding it together." Another fretted that Gingrich might be "depressed" and wondered if a "good dose of antidepressants might not help, if he isn't on them already." In assuring tones, the member plots out the speaker's plan for "self-renewal," complete with rest and daily laps at the House pool.

And, indeed, there are other concrete signs that he is relinquishing control. Gingrich has disbanded the Speaker's Advisory Group, the elite clique that once issued all commands. In its place, he's set up a new leadership group that includes representatives from all factions, the Conservative Action Team, the moderates: everyone, and thus no one. Last year, at this time, House Republicans had already passed fifty bills. This year,

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they've made three failed attempts and adjourned for a long recess.

The speaker's problems started in late January after the Ethics Committee charged him the $300,000 fine. The next week, Gingrich held a Saturday morning town hall meeting at Roswell City Hall in Georgia. He began with a standard inspirational talk about the Balanced Budget Amendment, then opened the floor for questions. There were several gooey supporters and a few hecklers. The last was Anne Bartoletti, of Alpharetta, who held up signs blaring "Shame, Newt, Shame," "Speaker of Lies," and "Slippery Lizard." "Since you have admitted to, and been convicted of, violating the ethics of the House," queried Bartoletti, "I would like to know, why shouldn't you resign in shame?"

The hissing lizard in Newt was awakened. "I wasn't going to talk about this today.... I think there is an amazing double standard.... You people on the left can do anything you want, and nobody seems to notice. But, if you are a conservative, and you follow the law, and you hire lawyers, and you do what you can, if you make a single mistake, you had better plan to be pilloried."

Those four seconds of grumbling caused a great rumbling of discontent. Members who had worked to reelect the speaker, sometimes at great cost to themselves, and who now wished very much to move the focus on to something else besides Gingrich's ethics, were aggrieved. "We felt the issue had been dealt with, and when he responded that way, it brought it all back again," says Shays. "I've got 500 constituents angry at me for voting for him for speaker, and he shouldn't be getting me into this position. He should just pay the penalty and move on. It's fair to say that, even among his supporters, the feeling is he has no margin of error."

Dark talk of The Twin—the unhappy, angry Newt who stalks the Newt of the Fourth Wave—began to emerge. "People are asking, 'Is Newt a manic depressive, is he depressed?' " says one Republican lobbyist close to leadership. "My view is that he doesn't think he's guilty of anything. It's like a man on death row who keeps saying, 'I'm innocent, I'm innocent,' but the jury is already in. Newt psychologically can't get over that fact, which is why I think he will keep bringing up the matter again and again. If Newt can control his erratic behavior he stays, but if he reverts to his old behavior he's gone. Right now members are waiting for a signal."

After the Georgia speech, Gingrich was put on a strict regimen of pollster Prozac. "He has been told to smile more and use the phrase 'fun, we're having fun' whenever possible," says the Republican lobbyist. He's also been instructed to show his profile to the camera whenever possible, since it makes him look gentler. And the strategy seems to be popular. "As long as Newt can discipline himself to be upbeat and cheery and positive, he'll do well," says Representative John Shadegg of Arizona. "The American people like upbeat, happy people. Even in his darkest moments Clinton smiles. All Newt needs to do is smile."

Gingrich's erratic mood swings have not escaped the notice of even the most lowly of his subjects. Somewhere deep in the House, young staffers have set up an elaborate and secret poll to guess the day the speaker steps down. So far, thirty-three Republicans and twenty-eight Democrats have signed up. The poll is run by a Republican; Republican participants are given the code-names of presidents, and Democrats hide under the names of first ladies. The entry fee is $15, plus an initial $100 bet, placed with "Alexander Hamilton," the main bookie. Members buy and trade shares, each worth a quarter, and those who eventually guess the right day will split the pool. At first, people chose days for prosaic reasons: the last day of the year, since that was the day the pool would be divided if the speaker never resigned; Christmas; Gingrich's birthday. But, now, the mean of chosen days has moved closer and closer to the present: it was once December 14; now it's June 4.

Trading soared after the ethics vote. The day of Gingrich's outburst in Georgia, volume was so overwhelming that trading had to be shut down early; 300 shares were traded that day. On February 18, a rumor spread that Gingrich had publicly berated a longtime staffer, and 180 shares were traded. The composite of the ten most expensive days has soared from $508 to $3,000. "The April stock is just flying away," frets one Republican bettor, "Ulysses S. Grant." "Four days ago a rumor went out that he looked flush, and then some people heard he wasn't feeling well. It could be the sniffles, or worse. Now people are buying up even early March shares. I mean, I don't think he's out that soon, but who knows? It's going wild."

Speculation is rampant at higher levels as well. Each week, another member of leadership has to tamp down rumors that he is priming himself to succeed Gingrich. The main suspects are all members of Gingrich's trusted leadership circle—Dick Armey, Tom DeLay, John Boehner, John Kasich and even diehard loyalist Bill Paxon. Armey's staff is suspiciously primping their boss, polishing his TV image and prompting him to lose weight. In a recent whip meeting, DeLay went around the room to ask all the deputy whips their level of support for Gingrich. "He was doing ground research without seeming too apparent," says a member who was there. "Everyone's being intensely loyal, but, if the shoe drops, they're ready to shove him out the door." Strangely, and without prompting, members will often praise Paxon, who is dogged in his public support of Gingrich. Meanwhile, the speaker himself seems to have disappeared; in the last ten-day recess, he made only one brief appearance. The subjects wonder: Has the king lost control of his own destiny?

To walk into the Progress and Freedom Foundation is to walk into a shell. The hall table is littered with evidence of what the place once was—cheery manifestos like "FUTURE INSIGHT: A MAGNA CARTA FOR THE KNOWLEDGE AGE," a 1995 prospectus that plots schemes for "BIG CHANGE," "CYBERSPACE AND THE AMERICAN DREAM." Everything in the pamphlets is always in capitals; so far, very little of it has come to pass. "Truth in advertising," begins President Jeff Eisenach, lighting up the first of a chain of Marlboros. "I haven't

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seen Newt in about a year and a half." (Because the foundation was mentioned in the ethics investigation, lawyers suggested they not speak.) Behind him, the table is covered with photos of a luminous Newt in varied poses, waving his pudgy hands to greet an adoring crowd, beaming down at Eisenach's two young children. "Newt in 1995 was being watched for his next move forward," he says, pausing to exhale. "Now he's being watched for his next stumble."

For some of this dizzying tumble, movement zealots like Eisenach are willing to take the blame. "We made big mistakes in 1995," he confesses. "We felt like we only had 100 days to get things done. There was a frenetic quality, both unrealistic and disconcerting, about our effort. We brought out the worst inferences of the word 'revolution.' But now we learned that the system doesn't work that way. In reality, the way change happens is one step at a time, one bill at a time."

NEWT GINGRICH BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But for some mistakes the blame lies elsewhere. Eisenach does not think Gingrich was treated fairly by the Ethics Committee, and he thinks the semi-disastrous outcome could have been avoided. "The whole matter could have been handled more effectively. Newt was preoccupied with the business of governing, the business of steering the new majority, and I think he relied on people around him who told him it was well handled." Who exactly those people are Eisenach declines to say. Instead, he ends on a note of optimism, of sincere affection for the lost prophet: "Newt is absolutely in control of his destiny."

Eisenach sticks to his gentle musing, but some in his circle prefer barbs. Arianna Huffington, a sharp-tongued board member of the Progress and Freedom Foundation, published a blistering attack on the people around Newt on February 10 in *Roll Call*. Her target was Joe Gaylord, Gingrich's very secretive and most intimate adviser, "The Man Behind Gingrich's Fall." In her column, Huffington accuses Gaylord of a Stalinist purge, of systematically ousting anyone who threatens his own power, one by one, including Eisenach; Gingrich's former press secretary, Tony Blankley; pollster Frank Luntz; and Gingrich's close friends and former colleagues Vin Weber and Bob Walker. "At different times, he has gone after every gifted person around Gingrich he could not control," she writes.

Since Huffington's article, the banished consultants are speaking up to confirm her story, although anonymously. Advisers paint a portrait of a dark, jealous figure who secluded his keep like a shrewish and tantrum-prone wife (or like Dick Morris). "She is absolutely right about the systematic exclusion," confirms one shunned adviser. "Joe makes it impossible for someone who disagrees with him to get on Newt's schedule. Any decision where Joe has an opinion he will make sure a conflicting opinion does not get aired in front of Newt." A bleak psychoanalysis of Gaylord emerges. "It is a function of Joe's personality," says the former adviser. "He cannot tolerate conflict. He literally clams up. He freezes. It's like this panic symptom; you get the sense he wants to run."

The advisers never fail to mention that the people who are in the room, and who were whispering to Gingrich during his black period, are considerably more dim than they are and should be held accountable for the bad advice that has brought down the king. "The real question is whether the advice Gingrich is now getting is the best," says one Republican consultant. "The fact is, Joe gets to choose Gingrich's team, and he chooses people who can be controlled." These people are the group of pollsters Gingrich meets with every month or so—Fred Steeper, Bob Teeter, Linda Divall, Bill McInturff. "Linda Divall can be controlled," says a consultant who has worked with both Gaylord and Divall. "Other pollsters would have stood up and yelled, 'You've got to do something! I can't let you do this!' But she's the get-along go-along type. If Gingrich were to have the very best talents around him, it would have kept him from screwing up the situation as bad as he did."

The anti-Gaylord faction sees the usual tragedy: the

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bad guys just won't let Newt be Newt. The pollsters, they say, have stamped the life out of Gingrich, crushed him into a dime-store pol. He is now, well, ordinary, the bulb of the Republican Enlightenment dimmed. "Pollsters are the least creative people in the world," says a former adviser. "Joe systematically advances the traditional Republican clique of advisers. It's one thing for Newt to have an ambassador to that world but quite another for the world to come to dominate him. We wanted much more from Newt. We wanted him to lead not just a party, but a revolution."

Former Gingrich advisers in the anti-Gaylord camp have pored over the Gaylord years to pinpoint his crucial mistakes. They are, certainly, many. His worst was encouraging Gingrich to sign the $4.5 million book deal, which brought on his first moment of public shame. They also pin Gaylord with advising Newt to cut the impossible deal with the Ethics Committee forbidding him to coordinate his defense and then actively helping Newt sabotage that deal.

Gaylord is a template on which any Republican critic, moderate or conservative, can focus his complaints. He is alternately accused of being too much the warrior and too anodyne. He is faulted for encouraging the speaker's nastiest, pettiest bulldog instincts, his outbursts of useless anger, and then covering them up with dumb, fuzzy makeovers. Schooled at the National Republican Campaign Committee (NRCC), Gaylord spent most of the last twenty years plotting races. This endless campaign mindset, critics say, brings out the frenzied, mean side of Gingrich.

At the same time, Gaylord authored what conservatives derisively call the "Dare to be Dull Campaign." In 1996, Gaylord predicted an impending recession and advised Gingrich to ride it out by being jolly and vacuous. Gingrich was encouraged to smile, wear makeup to cover his bags and make a series of apolitical appearances. One shining moment was his appearance on the Jay Leno show, petting a squealing pig. The crowning achievement came at the Republican convention, with Gingrich's now infamous beach volleyball speech, authored by Gaylord.

Lost in the Gaylord demonology is Newt himself, once the great leader of the revolution, now a consultant's puppet. This is perhaps the greatest sign of diminution of all. In the narrative of the Gaylord/Gingrich embrace that Gingrich's former worshipers love to relate, it is Gaylord who is in control. He is, they say, the puppeteer; he pulls the strings and keeps the money. The relationship between the two men goes back to the mid-'70s, when Gaylord, along with then-Congressman Guy Vander Jagt and then-Finance Director Wyatt Stewart, controlled the purse strings at the NRCC. They helped Gingrich get elected and immediately took him in. Gingrich was just beginning to agitate and threatened to shake up the flailing organization in order to use it as a tool to achieve his master plan of winning the House. Gingrich was essentially bought off by the NRCC trio to keep him quiet, according to former congressmen: Gaylord used NRCC money to fund Gingrich's pet projects, such as galas honoring Ronald Reagan. Then in 1989, the narrative goes, Gaylord engineered Gingrich's victory as minority whip by sealing the two votes necessary to beat Dick Cheney. In the meantime, Gaylord got rich. Even after he left the NRCC, in 1989, he was still on the payroll. In the last election cycle, he was paid $240,000 by the NRCC, $26,000 from the RNC and $350,000 from Friends of Newt Gingrich, according to FEC reports.

Gaylord guards his privacy and would not return phone calls. But his old friends defend him. "No one in this town can match his encyclopedic knowledge of races," says Vander Jagt. "And he stands alone as the implementer of Newt's vision and ideas."

The speculation about Gingrich's fall may be idle talk, and Gingrich may recover as he has many times before. But, whatever happens, a certain permanent dynamic of disappointment has set in. The visionaries are still willing to be dazzled by Gingrich, but they are a lot more skittish now. Once they think the king has taken to waltzing in his nightshirt, even a little bit, it's hard to feel the same old awed way about him again. On February 12, at a dinner at Washington's Mayflower Hotel, Gingrich gave what many describe as an inspiring speech in support of Ward Connerly, the black University of California regent who led the fight to end affirmative action. It was a Gingrich classic, veering emotionally from Lincoln to Lech Walesa to Nelson Mandela to John Wayne. Conservatives loved it. One young committed conservative described it as a "revival thing, a quasi-religious experience." She said a friend turned to her during the speech and said, "Tonight, I remember why I am a conservative." Yet, within a day of the speech, the same conservatives were spreading rumors that Gingrich had gone back on his word, that, in a meeting on the hill, he had told a group of Republicans he was not sure he'd push anti-affirmative action legislation in the House.

But why should they be surprised? Gingrich has always waffled wildly on race, from campaigning for Proposition 209 to celebrating Charles Rangel and Jesse Jackson. It's not Gingrich that's changed so much as his subjects. Two years ago, there was a collective hair-trigger willingness among the chatterers and the courtiers of the Washington right to see everything the speaker did as proof of his divine right to rule; now there is an equally hair-trigger impulse to see everything as proof of less-than-divine madness. Conservatives speak of Gingrich as if he's undergone some dark transformation, but maybe he's always been just what he seems now—an erratic and emotional but basically traditional speaker, more concerned with counting votes and passing bills than with ideological purity. During last week's recess, Gingrich had dinner with Margaret Thatcher, and the irony was all too obvious. Gingrich was supposed to be America's Iron Lady, but he has succeeded, as the conservative writer David Brooks pointed out in *The Standard* in October, as "a superior Bob Dole." But that is painful to admit because it means that conservatives have been wrong all this time, that, behind the grand rhetorical sweep, the vacuum tubes and the ice buckets are all there is. •

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

Fidelity

Even while the Clinton administration insists on the need to envelop all of Europe in a big NATO embrace, it is threatening a trade war with its key allies over Cuba. Maybe the cold war isn't totally over after all. Not if the two most pressing issues of foreign policy are NATO and Cuba. NATO, if you recall, was created to keep the Red Army from marching through Germany to the Eiffel Tower. Cuba was a Soviet satellite pointed like a dagger at Key West.

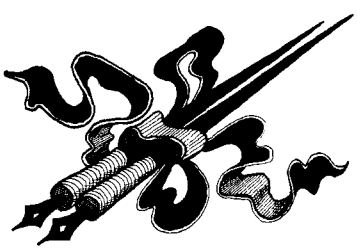
Well, you might ask, hasn't the Russian Army, unable to subdue even the Chechens, disintegrated? And hasn't Cuba, long ago abandoned by Moscow, turned from parroting Carlos Marx to peddling Coppertone on its private beaches? Yes, but certain things are eternal. One of them is the staying power of an idea whose time has passed when it has a big political, military and industrial bureaucracy behind it: namely NATO. The other is the resentment of a military giant—embarrassed, frustrated and at times driven plumb *loco*—by a pygmy: namely Uncle Sam and Compañero Fidel.

Since 1959, when Castro's ragtag army marched into Havana and deposed the U.S.-supported Batista dictatorship, eight U.S. presidents have come and gone. Every one has solemnly pledged to oust Fidel and restore Cuba to the Free World. One administration, Kennedy's, even tried to assassinate him. But the wily *máximo líder* has survived them all. And he will no doubt survive Bill Clinton and even Jesse Helms, the latest in a long list of Yankees outraged that such a little "pissant country" (as Lyndon Johnson used to refer to North Vietnam) should stand up to the U.S. and get away with it.

That, after all, is why Castro infuriates Washington as much as the Chechens do Moscow. During the cold war, the U.S. complained that Cuba was fomenting revolution in Latin America (albeit with little success) and making life miserable for our friends. Now, the problem is that Castro won't simply pack up like the Sandinistas. Lately, Latin America's audacious autocrat has even lured investments from our closest allies.

Foreigners unfamiliar with America's Fidel obsession may wonder what all the fuss is about. Sure, he runs a police state (and also a welfare state that has given Cubans longer life expectancy and lower than average mortality rates for children under 5 in Latin America and a higher literacy rate than the United States). And, sure, it would be nice if Cuba were a model democracy. But it never has been, and, when Castro eventually goes and the Miami Cubans flood back to replace him, don't expect them to act like the ACLU, either. Indeed, many poor and black Cubans fear the returning Miami exiles would be just as autocratic and wipe out the social gains of the revolution.

Besides, since when did democracy become a prerequisite for U.S. favor in the Caribbean? We've long tolerated, and even celebrated, tinhorn dictatorships as long as they kept order, provided a safe climate for investment and semi-concealed their drug-running and money laundering. For all the current palaver about democracy, which has now replaced anti-communism as the mantra of a foreign policy establishment scrambling for a new paradigm, this is still the rule we follow—not only in Latin America, but nearly everywhere else in the Third World. We draw the line at Iraq and Iran not because they are dictatorial (we considered Saddam Hussein a fine—well, at least a tolerable—fellow before he threatened our clients in the gulf, as we did the Shah of Iran), but because they challenge our political and economic objectives.



As far as the world's biggest non-democracy and human rights offender—China—is concerned, we have decided, realistically, that commerce comes before crusading. Only last week Clinton reiterated his policy of "engagement"—i.e. subordinating democracy to trade. "The policy we are following of engaging with China, to work where we agree and to honestly air our disagreements and work through them," the president declared, "is the right policy for the people of the United States and indeed for the world into the twenty-first century."

Why then, one might ask, is it not also the right one for undemocratic Cuba? One reason is that China is big, strong and far away. The other is that Cuba is small, weak and nearby. Moreover, Cuba regularly thumbs its nose at Uncle Sam. Little countries in the shadow of big ones are supposed to show respect. Castro has made us look ham-handed and paranoid. Even worse, our own allies are siding with him against us.

So what is to be done? We could invade and install a "friendly" regime. But we tried that once and were humiliated. We could treat Cuba the way we do China. But that would annoy the Miami Cubans who feed the coffers of both parties. So we continue doing what we've done for forty years: try to make the lives of the Cuban people so miserable that they will topple Castro and turn the country over to the Miami politicians-in-waiting.

But lately Canadian and European investors have ignored the U.S. embargo, investing in Cuba's tourism and mining industries. Last year, Congress passed a bill, which Clinton signed, allowing Americans (including naturalized Cubans) to sue, in U.S. courts, foreign corporations that utilize American assets nationalized by Cuba after the revolution. Though Clinton later suspended this provision, other elements of the Helms-Burton law, as it is known, continue to bar corporate executives investing in those properties from setting foot in the United States.

Rather than scurry away, the Europeans took the issue to the World Trade Organization (WTO) as an illegal U.S. obstruction to free trade. Ironically, the WTO, along with NAFTA, is the centerpiece of Clinton's foreign economic policy. Nevertheless, the administration last week denied the WTO's right to intervene, claiming the sanctions are a matter of U.S. "national security."

Alas, there is one problem: Cuba is a bankrupt little place with no allies, located only ninety miles from a nuclear-armed superpower determined to starve it to death. A threat to *our* security? Please. This would be funny if anyone inside the Beltway had a sense of humor. The Europeans have, for a change, stood up for principle; Castro is having a good laugh; and the U.S. once again has egg on its face.

Clinton can blame only himself for this fiasco. He signed Helms-Burton because he feared losing a few Cuban votes in Florida and New Jersey. Now his cherished WTO is reeling, the allies are mutinous and the U.S. looks like an international bully. But not to worry. Last fall, when the U.N. General Assembly voted 138 to 3 to condemn the U.S. embargo against Cuba, two countries stood by America's side: Israel and Uzbekistan.

So what if U.S. policy toward Cuba is illogical, vindictive and self-defeating? It's not meant to be about logic, let alone democracy. It's about indignation. Sure, Cuba oppresses its people. But the real "crime of Cuba," to use the title of Carleton Beals's classic 1933 study, is that it defies Washington and survives. For that, it cannot be forgiven or even left alone.

RONALD STEEL

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Criminal Appeal

Luther Whitney, the protagonist of **Absolute Power** (Castle Rock), is a sixtyish, thoughtful, skillful jewel thief. Clint Eastwood is a sixtyish, thoughtful, skillful director. Eastwood plays Whitney, but the apt casting began before the picture. In its precision and plan, the film feels as if Luther Whitney had directed it.

This is yet one more story set in and around the White House. (Query: Does Hollywood have a rentable set of White House interiors? When *Dave* was finished with them, did *The American President* rent them, with a few others to follow until they reached Eastwood? Most interiors have individual designs, but what can you do with the Oval Office?) However, it begins in a mansion just outside Washington that Whitney robs, not of its breathtaking collection of Old Masters but of its jewels and coin collection.

While he is in the vault, itself a lushly furnished room, two people enter the large bedroom next door, and Whitney can watch them through a two-way mirror. One is the young wife of the mansion's 80-year-old owner. The other is the president of the USA. Both are slightly loaded, and they begin sex play that soon gets rough and that ends disastrously—for her. Whitney, unseen, witnesses it all. He gets away, but quickly the Secret Service and the police learn that someone saw what happened. Whitney is wanted, alive or, preferably, dead.

Like almost all thrillers, even when they are burnished as realistically as this one, *Absolute Power* flies into the improbable at its big moments. Example: when Whitney slips out of the mansion on that fateful night, he is chased through the woods by two Secret Service agents, and this sixtyish man outruns them even though he is carrying a sack of loot. But, unlike most thrillers, the passages between the action sequences are more than cellulose padding.

William Goldman's screenplay, adapted from a novel by David Baldacci, gives Whitney some talent as a draughtsman. In our first glimpse of him, he is copying elements of an El Greco in the gallery of the mansion he is scouting. He is a widower who was estranged from his wife and is trying to win back the affection of his daughter (Laura Linney). She is a prosecutor in Washington and, because of his prison past and its effect on her mother, she thoroughly dislikes her father. The chief Secret Service agent (Scott Glenn) and the chief homicide detective (Ed Harris) have reasons to respect each other. The owner of the mansion (E.G. Marshall), a venerable political potentate who made the president's career, had installed that two-way mirror so he could watch his young wife and her dates. The characters of the president himself (Gene Hackman) and his chief of staff (Judy Davis) are less well developed.

These competent actors know how to handle what they are given, with Linney particularly engaging—tart yet vulnerable. And Eastwood, who knows as much about presenting himself as Whitney does abut concealing himself, is a very pleasing center. An instance from the dialogue. (Goldman's screenplay and three volumes of his previous screenplays are published by Applause Books.) Goldman wrote this line for Eastwood, about Harris, spoken to his daughter: "He said we might come over for dinner." Eastwood—and I'll bet the change was his idea—says "supper" instead of "dinner." This change, small as it is, makes Whitney one of the audience that is watching him.

As his career progressed, Eastwood became increasingly careful to give himself characters with flaws and internal conflicts, instead of monoliths like Dirty Harry. In *Unforgiven* he was a reformed gunman who returned to killing unwillingly in order to make money for his children; *In the Line of Fire* made him a Secret Service agent who felt responsible for the fate of JFK; in *The Bridges of Madison County* he was pinned in a middle-age moral-emotional problem. Here he is a Korean War vet, Purple Heart, who has done prison time but still enjoys the chess game of burglary, who wants to make a final score and also peace with his beloved daughter before he fades away. The character facets of Eastwood's latter-day career have helped him a lot; but there's another factor that developed as time went on, one that aids him at least as much as script-given attributes: his face.

Eastwood understands, as a director, what his star's face is worth—a testament of life lived, of victories missed and defeats redeemed, of a worn but persistent

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Daytrippers. *A young suburban wife, suspicious of her husband, invades Manhattan with her entire family to search for the truth. A spritely, light-fingered debut by Greg Mottola. (Reviewed 3/10/97)* **Hamlet.** *Despite some of Kenneth Branagh's innovations, his performance, along with the work of a generally fine cast, brims with color and vitality. (1/27/97)* **Prisoner of the Mountains.** *Tolstoi's story updated to very recent Chechnya. Articulated differently from the original but with compassion and truth. (2/24/97)* **Sling Blade.** *A dreadfully misleading title. Billy Bob Thornton wrote and directed and plays the leading role in a moving, perceptive drama. A man released after twenty-five years in an Arkansas mental hospital seeks a world in which he can live. (2/10/97)*—**SK**

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beauty. Everything that Eastwood does is helpful, but his face is in itself the film's true foundation.

This is perhaps even more true of the French star Alain Delon. Apparently Delon is now retired, but a 1967 film of his has just been released here in its original version. **Le Samourai** (Artificial Eye) was directed by Jean-Pierre Melville, a hero of the French New Wave, who wrote the taut screenplay from a Joan McLeod novel. The picture, which is about a Parisian contract killer, was released here in a doctored version in the early 1970s under the title *The Godson*—apropos of you know what. Now, restored, it is given its real American premiere at the Film Forum in New York.

The original title is wrong, too. A samurai did not accept commissions to kill merely for money: honor and ethics were involved. But Delon's character is simply a technician with no criterion except efficiency and no purpose except cash. He is alone. He has a girlfriend who adores him, but he accepts her adoration rather stonily. He lives within himself. Melville gives him no antecedents or explanations, few feelings and very little dialogue. A schemer, his drama is in the rupture of his schemes.

Melville's establishing shot at the start establishes more than place. We see a shadowy, mean room, two windows at the back pasted with gray light. It's like a stage set in black and white. Then we see that there's a man present, an inhabitant of this dark, lying on the bed, smoking. It's only after Delon leaves this room that some color—not much—enters the film. The silent stalker slips out of his lair into the world, kills, withdraws.

What Melville quite rightly counted on to bolster his film, to answer questions and also to suggest new ones, was Delon's face. Gray-eyed, delicate, almost angelic, Delon's face is so unconnected with his profession that we are strangely awed. Antonioni used this contradiction differently in *Eclipse* by making Delon a busy stockbroker. Melville uses that face to effect a reversal of convention.

Here is an icy killer, with no overt claims to our sympathy. Yet, through Melville's intense emphasis on his face, we are held. The action is lean and shivery, but it's the face that holds us. We want to know more about this man though we doubt that we will. Thus the film medium exercises a peculiar strength: it transforms an actor's face, in itself, into a protagonist.

Correction. In the column of March 3, one sentence read: "Let's not hear that *Michael* was directed by Nora Ephron." It should have read: "Let's note here...." •

The All of the If

BY JAMES WOOD

Herman Melville: A Biography Volume I, 1819-1851 by Hershel Parker

(Johns Hopkins University Press, 941 pp., $39.95)

When it comes to language, all writers want to be billionaires. All long to possess so many words that using them is a fat charity. To be utterly free in language, to be absolute commander of what you do not own—this is the greatest desire of any writer. Even the deliberate paupers of style—Hemingway, Pavese, late Beckett—have secret longings for riches, and strive to make their reductions seem like bankruptcy after wealth rather than fraud before it: Pavese translated *Moby-Dick* into Italian. Realists may protest that it is life, not words, that draws them as writers; yet language at rush hour is like a busy city. Language is infinite, but it is also a system, and so it tempts us with the fantasy that it is closed, like a currency or an orchestra. What writer does not dream of touching every word in the lexicon once?

In *Moby-Dick*, Herman Melville nearly touched every word once, or so it seems. Language is pressed and consoled in that book with Shakespearean agility. No other nineteenth-century novelist writing in English lived in the city of words in which Melville lived; they were suburbanites by comparison. No other novelist of that age could swim in the poetry of "the warmly cool, clear, ringing, perfumed, overflowing, redundant days...." And so, despite the usual biographical lamentations, despite our knowledge that *Moby-*

Journeys

From *The Suitcase*

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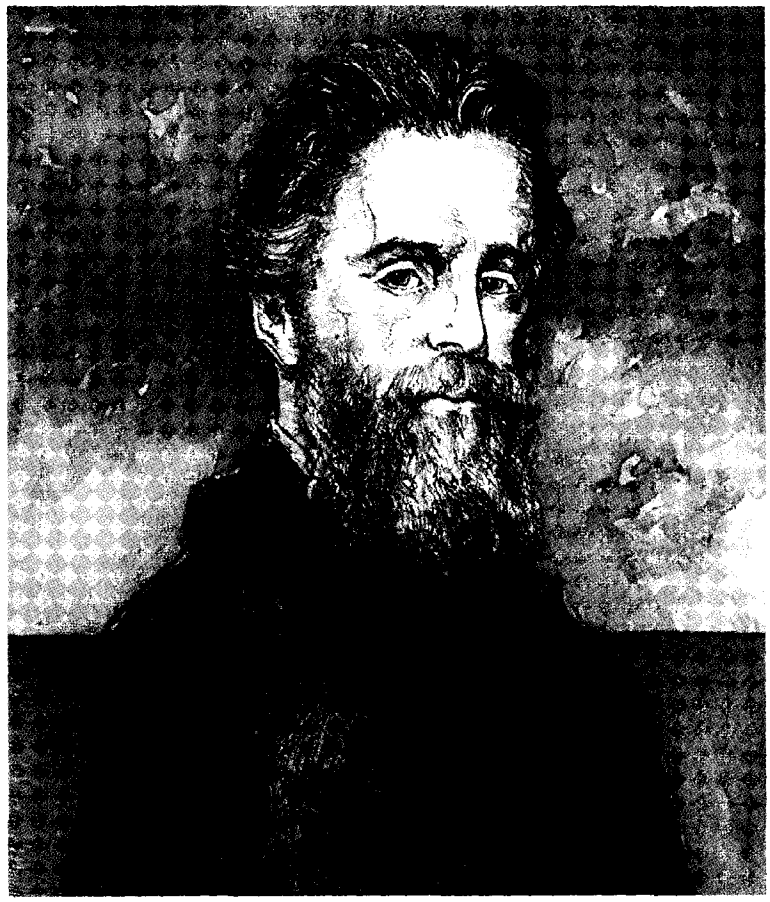
Dick went largely unappreciated, that in 1876 only two copies of the novel were bought in the United States, that in 1887 it went out of print with a total sale of 3,180 copies, that these and other neglects narrowed Melville into bitterness and savage daily obedience as a New York customs inspector—despite all this, one says lucky Melville, not poor Melville. For, in writing *Moby-Dick*, he wrote the novel that is every novelist's dream of freedom. It is as if he painted a patch of sky for the imprisoned.

It is one of the virtues of Hershel Parker's huge, puzzling semi-biography (it covers only the years up to *Moby-Dick*) that this great artistic achievement is always visible. It is a necessary virtue because there is so much else visible in Parker's account that Melville's books disappear a little. Parker has spent his life in Melville-devotions. He is not a critic, he is a connoisseur of facts. He tells us in his introduction that he has spent many years working on the *New Melville Log*, a documentary account of Melville's movements, and that in writing this biography he simply moved chunks of the *Log* from one computer file to the other. His biography is a displaced log, complete with coordinates and tides. (Describing Melville's first whaling voyage, Parker does indeed fill an entire page with little chips of longitudinal and latitudinal coordinates.) "Hershel is a faucet," repeats Parker from an esteemed predecessor's note in his papers, apparently in self-congratulation. But he should not congratulate himself. Parker is superstitious about facts and throws them about like salt, apparently hoping that they will drive out the devil of interpretation.



HERMAN MELVILLE BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The result is that Melville emerges as a very thick shadow. There is only a dim outline. All the moments in Melville's early life that might bear a little pressure—his increasing skepticism toward his inherited religion, his joyous discovery of radical metaphysics (an adventure that can be plotted as easily as his first sea-voyage), his growing infatuation with metaphor, an obsession that bursts into the love affair of *Moby-Dick*—are rubbed back into the mild pastels of "information." Parker quotes from almost every published contemporary review of Melville's novels—he fills twelve pages with reviews of *Omoo* (1847), Melville's second novel—but almost neglects to describe, let alone to interpret, the novels themselves. It is symptomatic of this book that it leads us to the brink of *Moby-Dick*, the novel that justifies Melville's life, and then ends, without describing that book or gathering its meanings. Parker's volume is in one sense a triumph of biography (it is buttressed by huge primary research, an astonishing amount of labor), but it also acts as argument against the tyranny of the form.

Melville is tied down by Parker's Lilliputian facts. But this book is at least a fine family chronicle, in which Melville moves and suffers. Parker sees that families wallow in detail—in letters, homes, arrangements, travels. For the Melvill family (as they spelled their name at the time of Herman's birth in 1819), money was the bulking detail. Herman's parents were the children of wealth, privilege and revolutionary courage. But Alan Melvill, Herman's father, was a deluxe Mr. Micawber, apparently importing French dry goods but actually threshing his way through the family inheritance. Parker reckons that, in all, he borrowed $20,000 from his father and from his parents-in-law. Nobody knows what this money satisfied. When he died, abruptly, in 1832 (he seems to have suffered some kind of mental collapse), he left the family deep in debt. Melville was 12. He was removed from school and sent to work in a bank for $150 a year.

Parker's narrative takes us through this bleak apprenticeship-to-nothing. Melville was a year and a half at the bank, and after the bank came work in his brother's store as a clerk, and school teaching, and his decision, at the age of 20, to join a whaling ship. In Polynesia, Melville jumped ship and spent time with a tribe of cannibals. His first book, *Typee* (1846), is an autobiographical account of his adventures, and it was taken as such by contemporary readers. Melville's unsympathetic view of the activity of Christian missionaries in Polynesia guaranteed hostile reviews from papers and journals associated with churches. Such critics would note all future examples of religious skepticism in Melville's writing. But the book was an international success. Largely owing to the unconventional sexual escapades described by a willing Melville, the young writer became what Parker calls "a contemporary sex symbol."

Parker is in love with Melville. He soothes the writer, pads his bitterness, lightens his burgeoning agonies of authorship. The book's pageant of detail drowns Melville's tremors. The writer is heroic: "Augusta was perceptive enough to recognize her brother as noble-souled." And a king must marry a queen: when Melville marries Elizabeth Shaw, Parker gallantly decides that "biographers have been led astray by an awkward early daguerreotype of Elizabeth Shaw...." She "must have been a handsome young woman," he smacks, although the unawkward daguerreotype shows an awkwardly plain woman, with a long, prudent face. But Parker becomes a happy courtier, stuttering mildnesses like Billy Budd: "Lizzie was not the greatest belle of Boston, but she was one of the most privileged—the only young woman that October to hear from the bearded lips of a brilliant, dark, muscular, handsome young man enthralling accounts of his adventures...."

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It is in its oddly suave account of Melville's religious development that this book fails most tremendously. Although Parker deals with the occasional detail about Melville's churchgoing (or lack of it: Melville was a fitful attender) or about the stern Calvinism of his mother, Maria Melville, it is not until very late in his story that he considers Melville's abused relationship to his inherited faith, a relationship that is the absent, sunless center of all his greatest fiction, poetry and letters. Parker's comments do not suggest a very deep understanding of Melville's blockages. "Original Sin had not become an outmoded theological conceit in Maria Melville's house, and till his death her second son [Herman] had to resort to that concept, at times, to make sense of the world." But Melville could not make sense of the world—and partly because the idea of Original Sin had broken his world.

Melville burrowed in Montaigne's *Essays* and Pierre Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary* in the period just before writing *Moby-Dick*. They were useful, breezes Parker, "for their worldly-wise skepticism, which braced him against the superficial pieties demanded by his time"—which is too worldly-wise an interpretation. Melville did not need to be braced against the pieties of his age, and they demanded little from him. He needed to be braced against the flickering horror of his refusal to believe, and then braced against the sour clarity of his refusal entirely to unbelieve.

Melville was born into the Calvinism of the Reformed Dutch Church. At his baptism, his parents were asked if they understood that all children are "conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea to condemnation itself, yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of his Church ought to be baptised." It was a theology that stressed a quality of helplessness: we are predestined by God's free grace to be chosen, or not chosen, into the elect, but nothing we can do in the way of "good works" on earth will make any difference. We can be hired or sacked, but it is no good scheming for promotion.

In a typically glittering metaphor, Melville writes in *Pierre* (1852), the disastrous novel that followed *Moby-Dick*, that if our actions are "foreordained ... we are Russian serfs to Fate." Pierre is described as someone who is captured by "that most true Christian doctrine of the utter nothingness of good works," and is therefore inconsolable when tragedy overwhelms him. Melville's writing is shadowed by Calvinism, in the way that Nabokov's ape, when given a sheet of paper, drew the bars of his cage. "But we that write & print," he joked to Evert Duyckinck in 1849, "have all our books predestinated—& for me, I shall write such things as the Great Publisher of Mankind ordained ages before he published 'The World'—this planet, I mean."

Hawthorne best described Melville's struggle with belief. In 1856, Melville was briefly in England, to visit Hawthorne in Liverpool. The two sat on the beach at Southport and continued the unequal marriage of the last six years: Hawthorne silent and tidy, Melville messy with metaphysics. At this time, wrote Hawthorne, Melville said that he had "pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated." He added: "It is strange how he persists ... in wandering to and fro over these deserts.... He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other."

In his relation to belief, Melville was like the last guest who cannot leave the party; he was always returning to see if he had left his hat and gloves. And yet he did not want to be at the party, either. It is just that he had nowhere else to be and would rather be with people than be alone. He was tormented by God's "inscrutable" silence—this is clear from the work. Moby Dick, who is both God and Devil, flaunts his unhelpful silence as God does to Job: "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook?" In the chapter "The Tail," Ishmael admits that if he cannot really comprehend the whale's rear, then he can hardly see his face: "Thou shalt see my back parts, my tail, he seems to say, but my face shall not be seen," an appropriation of the verse in Exodus in which God tells Moses that "thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen."

In 1857, while traveling through Egypt, he visited the Pyramids, and he was gripped by the torment of their possible emptiness. "It was in these pyramids that was conceived the idea of Jehovah," he writes. In *Moby-Dick*, we are brought to the "pyramidical silence" of the whale. In *Pierre*, he will not leave alone this torment and fingers it like a wounded rosary, which is partly why the book is so impacted. "Silence is the only Voice of our God," he writes there. He jibes at God: "doth not Scripture intimate, that He holdeth all of us in the hollow of His hand?—a Hollow, truly!" Perhaps, he proposes, our searches are like this:

> By vast pains we mine into the pyramid; by horrible gropings we come to the central room; with joy we espy the sarcophagus; but we lift the lid—and no body is there!—appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of a man!

More than this, Melville saw that the world did not look like God's world, and that we cannot behave like God's children because His standards are cruelly impossible. He has Plotinus Plinlimmon say as much in his sermon in *Pierre*. Though "the earthly wisdom of man be heavenly folly to God; so also, conversely, is the heavenly wisdom of God an earthly folly," muses Plinlimmon. And who has not been struck, continues the sermon, by "a sort of infidel idea, that whatever other worlds God may be Lord of, he is not the Lord of this; for else this world would seem to give the lie to Him; so utterly repugnant seem its ways to the instinctively known ways of Heaven."

We can get a sense of the violent bevel on which Melville's faith quivered—half on and half off—if we compare him to two Christians who were writing thoughts very like Plotinus Plinlimmon's exactly at this moment in the middle of the nineteenth century. In Denmark, Kierkegaard strengthened Christianity (as he saw it) by reminding us, like Plinlimmon, that Christianity is a "folly" for humans, that "one must be quite literally a lunatic to become a Christian." And, in England, Cardinal Newman looked at the world, in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, and almost agreed with Melville:

> I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth, of which my whole being is so full.... I look into this living busy world, and see no reflexion of its Creator. This is, to me, one of those great difficulties of this absolute primary truth, to which I referred just now. Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world.

Kierkegaard and Newman suffered like Melville, and suffered eloquently, feeling the lack of what Newman beautifully calls "the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design." But both could hear the voice of God, however thick its accent. They were full of it. For Melville, however, it was "Silence." In his trip to Egypt and to Jerusalem in 1857, God is an "idea," a malign "conception" that cannot be unconceived. God is never a voice.

So Melville slapped at God. He could not help playing the infidel: he was one of the most delvingly sacrilegious writers who ever existed. For him, metaphysics could not stop like a day-trip at some calm watering-place. Dialectic was always an elastic solitude stretching into the desert. In his letters to Hawthorne—a writer he self-describingly praised as

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one who "says No! in thunder," for "all men who say *yes* lie"—he churns himself into atheistical taunting, using Hawthorne's reticence as a stand-in for God's. Nobody can bear truth, he says. He whirls around, magnificently, in "atmospheric skepticisms." He liked to indulge in philosophical "ripping" in these letters. Why is it, he asks in a letter written in April 1851, that "in the last stages of metaphysics a fellow always falls to *swearing* so? I could rip an hour." (Parker's white comment: "he could 'rip' for an hour, but he did not"—this, about a letter in which Melville has already been ripping for an hour.)

Most people, he tells Hawthorne, "fear God, and *at bottom dislike* Him ... because they rather distrust His heart, and fancy Him all brain like a watch." Then he adds an elevated sneer: "You perceive I employ a capital initial in the pronoun referring to the Deity; don't you think there is a slight dash of flunkeyism in that usage?" He slapped at God; but, in some way, he could not do without the idea of being slapped by God in return.

Between 1847 and 1850, Melville majestically discovered three things: metaphor, metaphysics and Shakespeare. These were the years in which he grew into the labor of writing *Moby-Dick* (which was written between the winter of 1850 and the summer of 1851). *Mardi* (1849), his third novel but the first in which he indulged in philosophical "ripping," had been poorly received. Quickly, disdainfully, he turned out two hotcakes for money, *Redburn* (1849) and *White Jacket* (1850). Intellectually, his mind was abroad.

His reading, which had been eager but arbitrary, now took on a systematic wildness. Here, Parker, with his dribbling data, is useful. In 1847 and 1848, he bought or borrowed an edition of Shakespeare, a volume of Montaigne, a volume of Rabelais. In March, he read Sir Thomas Browne and Seneca; in June, Dante. In 1849 he bought Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, a book that delights in exposing the rationalist hollows of theological thinking. In the same year, he noted in his new edition of Milton that Milton had wandered in his religious belief: "I doubt not that darker doubts crossed Milton's soul, than ever disturbed Voltair [sic]. And he was more of what is called an Infidel."

But it was Shakespeare who furrowed his soul. He could not believe, he wrote to Evert Duyckinck in February 1849, that he had lived so long without properly reading Shakespeare, who now seemed to him like Jesus: "Ah, he's full of sermons-on-the-mount, and gentle, aye, almost as Jesus. I take such men to be inspired. I fancy that this moment Shakspeare [sic] in heaven ranks with Gabriel Raphael and Michael. And if another Messiah ever comes twill be in Shakespere's [sic] person." He was especially interested in madness and dark truth in Shakespeare.

In the summer of 1850, he met Hawthorne. His letters begin to sway somewhat maniacally. He assures Hawthorne that "I am not mad, most noble Festus!" In another: "This is rather a crazy letter in some respects, I apprehend." It is simply that he is growing: "Lord, when shall we be done growing?" he asks. Between 1849 and 1852, he is in a creative temper, flinging around words and ideas. In these letters he turns over, obsessively, the silence of God, and the sense that to speak truthfully in America demands a fit of secrecy. "Truth is ridiculous to men."

While he is busy seeing a world stripped of God's presence, he is busy theologizing literature. God has disappeared only to speak as literature. If the Messiah comes again, it will be as Shakespeare. But the Messiah has come again, and he is called Melville. It is Melville who, in *Moby-Dick*, will follow "Shakespeare and other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth." Here in America, Shakespeares are being born, Christ-like

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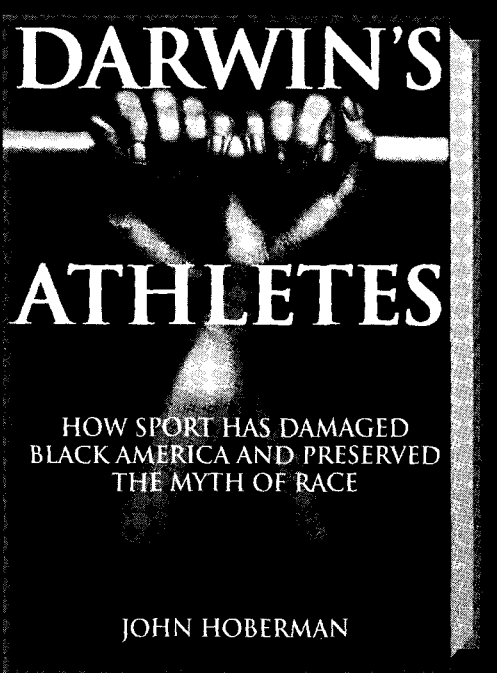

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creatures who will be crucified for telling the truth: "Though I wrote the Gospels in this century, I should die in the gutter," writes Melville in June 1851. Five months later, in November, he is groaning, fretting, racing: "Appreciation! Recognition! Is Jove appreciated?" In the same letter, he whistles, Whitman-like: "I feel that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at the supper, and that we are the pieces." Literature is the new church, and *Moby-Dick* its bible. He is building what he calls (in that novel) "Noah Webster's ark," a dictionary-ship, a bible-boat.

We hear, in these letters, the hymning, the fattened hysteria of *Moby-Dick*, its leaping exultations. But we also hear the self-pity and the self-absorption that make *Pierre* so intensely unlikable a book. In that novel, allegory points only to itself and is thus a continual self-advertisement. The book is an allegory supposed to remind us that such a book cannot exist in America. *Pierre* is a kind of Calvinist self-mutilation at the literary, rather than the theological, level. It is as if Melville says, in this book: well, if good works really do get you nowhere, here is a good work—this book—that will get me nowhere, because no one will acknowledge it as a good work. Writing becomes an unthanked charity.

During the time that Melville wrote *Moby-Dick*, he underwent a kind of insanity of metaphor. It was Melville's love of metaphor that drew him ever further into "Infidel-ideas." Metaphor, quite literally, bred metaphysics for Melville. His metaphor has a life of its own; it is not only Melville that is "growing," it is also his language. Melville is the most naturally metaphorical of writers, and one of the very greatest. He saw the inside of the whale's mouth covered with "a glistening white membrane, glossy as bridal satins"; the spouting jet of the whale made him look like "a portly burgher smoking his pipe of a warm afternoon;" and almost every page of *Moby-Dick* carries something like this. Melville drew on the example of late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century poetry and prose as naturally as if he were of that age and not a nineteenth-century American. He saw how metaphor domesticates and localizes (the whale as burgher) even as it enlarges. For with metaphor, as Sir Thomas Browne put it in *Religio Medici* (1642), "there is all Africa and her prodigies in us."

Soaked in theology, Melville was alert to the Puritan habit of seeing the world allegorically, that is, metaphorically. The world was a place of signs and wonders which could always yield up its meaning like secret ink. Melville did a certain amount of this sign-gazing himself. Writing to Evert Duyckinck in August 1850, he mentioned that he was writing on an old heirloom, a desk of his uncle's. "Upon dragging it out to day light, I found that it was covered with the marks of fowls ... eggs had been laid in it—think of that!—Is it not typical of those other eggs that authors may be said to lay in their desks...."

Melville had a way of following metaphor and seeing where it led him. He wrote to Duyckinck, offering *Mardi* for his library, in the hope that it

> may possibly—by some miracle, that is—flower like the aloe, a hundred years hence—or not flower at all, which is more likely by far, for some aloes never flower.

A year later, writing to Hawthorne, he used an image which has become celebrated:

> I am like one of those seeds taken out of the Egyptian Pyramids, which, after being three thousand years a seed and nothing but a seed, being planted in English soil, it developed itself, grew to greenness, and then fell to mould. So I. Until I was twenty-five, I had no development at all. From my twenty-fifth year I date my life.

Both similes force Melville into dialectic. Having embarked on them, he must follow their life and then their death. His book is like an aloe; but some aloes never flower, and since he has mentioned the flowering of the aloe, he must also mention the aloe's failure to flower. The second image is more striking, because Melville made this comparison at the very height of his creative fever, while writing *Moby-Dick*. At this pinnacle, he foresees falling into decline. And why? Because, having likened himself to one of the seeds from the Pyramids, he must follow his own metaphor, and record that these seeds "grew to greenness, and then fell to mould."

No one is actually *forced* by metaphor, except a madman. Melville chooses the metaphors that then squeeze their return from him. He knows that the seeds from the Pyramids were not like other seeds, and that they "fell to mould." But, of all writers, he understood the independent, generative life that comes from likening something to something else. Keats spoke of how language "yeasts and works itself up"—*works itself*. This was everything to Melville. Pondering Goethe's advice that one must "Live in the all, and then you will be happy," he writes: "This 'all' feeling.... You must often have felt it, lying on the grass on a warm summer's day. Your legs seem to send out shoots into the earth. You hair feels like leaves upon your head. This is the *all* feeling." What Melville is crediting here is our power to create new life, a life that exists independently from us. And this is the life of metaphor. You live "in the all" when you feel metaphorical, when you feel that your hair is not your hair but has become leaves, your legs not your legs but growing shoots. And, once they are growing, who can stop them?

The theological implications of Melville's ravishment by metaphor are immense. Metaphor carries something over, it changes. In his letters and in his fiction, Melville thinks through metaphor, uses it to sway his thought. He ends one letter by saying that he began his letter in a small way, yet "here I have landed in Africa." Metaphor transports him, and is then called upon to give image to that very transportation. In his note on Milton's "wanderings in religious belief," Melville wrote that "he who thinks for himself can never remain of the same mind"—Melville wanders, via metaphor, out of "the same mind" into a different mind, out of sameness into likeness or difference.

His love of metaphor leads Melville marvelously astray, theologically. His "wandering" love of language breaks up his God, and he encourages this; his love of language bribes him against that rival, the Original Author. An example: in Judea, in 1857, Melville was put into a cold trance by the rockiness of the landscape. "Is the desolation of the land the result of the fatal embrace of the Deity?" he asks in his journal. The land, he feels, must have produced the religion: "As the sight of haunted Haddon Hall suggested to Mrs Radcliffe her curdling romances, so I have little doubt, the diabolical landscapes [sic] great part of Judea must have suggested to the Jewish prophets, their terrific theology." What is terrific is the almost casual blasphemy of the metaphor. Ann Radcliffe wrote Gothic romances. Yet it is because Melville cannot resist the impulse of likeness that he is drawn into comparing biblical theology to a Gothic romance.

Moby-Dick represents the triumph of this atheism of metaphor. Or, perhaps, this polytheism of metaphor. For it is a book in which allegory explodes into a thousand metaphors; a book in which the Puritan habit of reading signs and seeing stable meanings behind them is mocked by an almost grotesque abundance of metaphor. In this book, meaning is mashed up like a pudding. The Godhead is indeed broken into pieces. Truth is kaleidoscopically affronted. The whale, which poor Ahab chases, is likened to everything under the sun, and everything under the moon, too—a portly burgher, an Ottoman, a book, a

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language, a script, a nation, the Sphinx, the Pyramids. The whale is also Satan and God. The whale is "inscrutable." It is so full of meanings that it threatens to have no meaning at all, which is the fear that Ishmael confesses to in the celebrated chapter called "The Whiteness of The Whale." Critics who persist in seeing in Melville an American Gnostic do so because the whale is a demiurge, a bad god. But what, Melville asks, if the whale means nothing? What if, at the very heart of the sarcophagus, there is absolutely nothing?

By late summer, 1851, it was over. The book was done. Parker is right to call *Moby-Dick* "the most daring and prolonged aesthetic adventure that had ever been conducted in the hemisphere in the English language." Melville had asked the question: How does an American writer make tragedy worthy of Shakespeare's without setting the story in the remote past? He answered it by making his novel a historical novel whose epoch is the whale—thousands of years old. As Walter Scott filled his novels with the dust of medieval France or Scotland, with clothes, dates, battles, so Melville filled his book with the clothes, dates and battles of the whale. The whale is a country and an age.

How easily it might not have worked! The power is all verbal. Without the language, the metaphysics would be just grain. Although one remembers the rhapsodies of poetry, one forgets how precise, how grounded, is the language, with what vernacular swing it moves. Melville Americanizes Shakespeare, gives it tilt. Where Shakespeare has an Antony like a dolphin, showing its back above the element it lived in, Melville has a democracy of porpoises, tossing their backs to heaven "like caps in a Fourth of July crowd." Queequeg, the cannibal, can go anywhere: "Transported to the Indies, his live blood would not spoil like bottled ale." Not for nothing does Ishmael pray to "the great democratic God."

Again and again one is thrilled by the teeter of metaphor, watching it almost fail, and then take like a skin graft. There is a mad persistence to this metaphorizing, a fiery pedantry. There is the noise the whale makes, "an enormous wallowing sound as of fifty elephants stirring in their litter"; the harpooners turning their harpoons in the very quick of the beast, and yet delicately, "as if cautiously seeking to feel after some gold watch that the whale might have swallowed." There is Pip, the little Negro boy, who falls into the water "like a traveler's trunk.... Bobbing up and down in the sea, Pip's ebon head showed like a head of cloves." There is Ahab's soul, "a centipede, that moves upon a hundred legs." And at last, the final chase, the whale sliding like metaphor itself through its fluid of meanings: "on each bright side, the whale shed off enticings."

This carnival comes to a chill rest in the chapter called "The Whiteness of The Whale." Here Ishmael asks if it is the whiteness of the whale that torments. For whiteness may signify many things (sanctity, purity, superiority) or it may signify nothing. It "stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation.... Whiteness is not so much a colour as the visible absence of colour, and at the same time the concrete of all colours ... a colourless, all-colour of atheism from which we shrink...." Here, in whiteness, is the end of allegory, and therefore the end of metaphor, and therefore the end of language. It is silence, and it sits in the book like some unnamed sea, ready to suck down all who come upon it.

Moby-Dick is the great dream of mastery over language. But it also represents a terrible struggle with language. For if the terror of the whale, the terror of God, is his inscrutability, then it is language that has partly made him so. Language does not console, is not another religion. It is Melville's abundance of words that is constantly filling everything with meaning, and emptying it out, too. Language breaks up God, releases us from the one meaning of the predestinating God, but merely makes that God differently inscrutable by flooding it with thousands of meanings. Metaphor insists on relationship, but to compare one thing with another is also to suggest nonrelationship, for nothing *is* ever like anything else. Melville's metaphors resemble the medieval preference for describing God by His attributes, by indirection. But, when you have done this, you have described God but you have not exactly known Him, and perhaps you have only aggravated the difficulty. Language is a voice that does not help us get any nearer to the silence of God; it is its own voice.

Moby-Dick is, then, a Messianic text, and Melville may have become another Messiah in writing it. Master of meaning, he is the real "great democratic God" to which Ishmael is pledged and by whom he is predestined. But to be a literary God is not to get closer to an actual God, and Melville, who could not entirely release the monitor of God from his life, surely knew this. He certainly knew that language is one of the veils of theology, not one of the clarities: "As soon as you say *Me*, a *God*, a *Nature*, so soon you jump off from your stool and hang from the beam," he wrote to Hawthorne. "Yes, that word is the hangman. Take God out of the dictionary, and you would have Him in the street."

No more than anyone else did Melville manage to get God into the street. He went, tidally, between belief and unbelief. Melville has Ishmael argue that life is always a ceaseless tide:

> There is no steady unretracing progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations, and at the last one pause:—through infancy's unconscious spell, boyhood's thoughtless faith, adolescence, doubt ... then scepticism, then disbelief, resting at last in manhood's pondering repose of If. But once gone through, we trace the round again: and are infants, boys, and men, and Ifs eternally. Where lies the final harbour, whence we unmoor no more?

Anhinga

There is a calisthenic finesse to the neck
as the poke-stick of the beak
comes up. The neck's loop revolves,
too sinuous to be plausible.
This neck has innuendoes of a fish,
must writhe and must wriggle and
must pivot in sopping
twists, distinctively drip-dry,
till the rough feathers regain their brackish glare.
Eel-spasms, annular
cascades, clamber the bayberry
over the frilled sludge where the gar
gelatinizes in its own repose.
The anhingas ogle the gorgeous sky
over Shark River and as they gaze
extend vespertilian
wings, meticulous and moist.
They hold their pose.
It's almost reverential for those,
like me, with worshipful proclivities,
when these black birds spread out such wings.

O anhingas on the floodgates and the levee bridge,
you pray with nothing but water and I see
your signatory darkness cloak the sun.

Eric Ormsby

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Theologically, Melville lived his life in an eternal If, which his love of metaphor only encouraged. Linguistically, in the gorgeous play of metaphor, he lived his life in an eternal All—which was at the same time an eternal If, because it could not console, could not banish the If, and in some way only deepened it. A god of a thousand meanings may be as absent as the God of one meaning. Ahab's monomaniacal hunt of the whale is not so far from Ishmael's multiple tolerance of it. Any true life is a blasphemously exhaustive hunt, and Melville lived a true life. Poor Melville, lucky Melville! •

Chicago Wright Viennese

By Joseph Rykwert

The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright by Neil Levine

(Princeton University Press, 524 pp., $85)

It is difficult to be fair to, or about, Frank Lloyd Wright. And it is as much his fault as ours. His followers insist that you cannot pick and choose among his many works, that you must accept him unconditionally as master; and his critics often trivialize his achievement. There are too many contradictions in Wright. He extolled architecture "in the nature of materials," but his buildings notoriously cracked and leaked. He was an egomaniac populist, a self-appointed aristocrat who set himself up as a proselytizing democrat. His towering self-confidence led him sometimes to claim that he was not only the greatest architect who ever lived, but the greatest architect there could ever be.

All this did not save him from depression, which brought him to the edge of suicide. And for all that, he remains the great master-builder who, while professing to be isolated and persecuted, became one of the most prolific architects of his time. In the public mind, Philip Johnson's wretched jibe stuck to Wright: "the greatest architect of the nineteenth century." It sits ill on a man who spent most of his life in the twentieth, and it taints him with the stigma of "irrelevance" to which his detractors often point. But Johnson's jibe also underlines his uniqueness, the difficulty of learning from Wright without becoming an imitator.

All the difficulties and the contradictions make me a grateful reader of Neil Levine's essay on Wright. I say "essay," even if it seems too modest a term for a book of 500 pages, and I mean it as a compliment, since Levine's remarkable book is really a group of expositions and criticisms. They are personal, argumentative and committed to a particular view of his hero, but they are also extremely well-informed about him and his background. This is not a dry academic monograph. Even where Levine's view of Wright does not quite coincide with my own, I have read him with profit; and anyway Wright is big enough to support both our interpretations. I agree with Levine, certainly, that Wright was America's greatest architect, though I am rather more skeptical about his later work.

I would root a good deal of Wright's architectural approach, as a thinker and a designer, in rather a different soil than that in which Levine plants it. (Root, soil, planting: the metaphor is appropriate.) My Wright is less historicist than his. Levine tends to invoke French and Italian sources for his view of his subject: Piranesi, Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli, the Hôtel de Salm (Jefferson's favorite building in Paris), formal gardens in France and Italy. All these precedents make Wright less a maverick, more a native, home-bred American, if you take the somewhat blousy Edwardian classicism which is associated with the "city-beautiful" movement as the American norm.

Early on in his book, Levine insists on this notion when writing about Wright's year-long stay in Fiesole in 1910: "He found an 'ineffable charm' in Italian architecture that had nothing to do with the 'rarefied air of scholasticism or pedantic fine art.... It lies close to the earth. Like a handful of the moist, sweet earth itself....' " The quotes are from a text that Wright wrote at the time. In a footnote, Levine assimilates this to the taste for "Mediterranean vernacular," of the sort that was evidenced by Le Corbusier and the Brutalists. But, returning to his text, he goes on: "Behind the forms of the Renaissance [Wright] saw the more basic ones of a vernacular or primitive tradition in which a 'simplified' set of conventions preserves and expresses fundamental values of the indigenous culture."

In this juxtaposition of high and low culture, of bookish Renaissance and folk idiom, Levine seeks to show that Wright's earlier concentration on type, on working within an articulated but fixed image of the house—whatever the scale and the program—was enlarged by an understanding of the give-and-take between that fixed image and the pressures and the eccentricities of an individual's requirements. In Levine's hands, Wright's concern with "folkways" becomes an acceptance of a timeless, universal, unconscious classicism, that formal canon of composition whose validity and power are illustrated in Italian rural building.

But Wright's vernacular, Mediterranean or otherwise, was something very different from the Brutalist architects of the 1950s and 1960s and their escapist nostalgia for Greek island houses. The vernacular to which Wright appealed was not so much Mediterranean as American, that is to say, colonial, and therefore relying on English precedent. Behind it lay an immemorial and Celtic ancestral wisdom, that of the mythified Welsh ancestors of the Lloyd Joneses, his mother's family. Later this same intuition allowed him to assimilate aspects of *Japonisme* and Mexican ornament into his personal manner.

As it happened, a number of British architects, all of them related more or less closely to the Arts-and-Crafts movement, the most distinguished of them Norman Shaw, had been looking to rural England with analogous ideas. Shaw had initiated the exploitation of "functional" dissymmetries, composing the massing and the fenestration of a house to display its internal organization. He did so in a manner which borrowed features and themes from rural Northern medieval and later building traditions. His influence marked the work of an important group of English architects: Voysey, Mackmurdo, Lethaby, Ashbee.

Unlike most of those architects, however, Wright was never a true Ruskinian. He would not subscribe to the Arts-and-Crafts doctrine, to the mistrust, even the condemnation, of machine manufactory. In 1901, he observed: "Artists who feel toward Modernity and the Machine now as William Morris and Ruskin were justified in feeling then had best ... wait and work sociologically.... In the field of art activity they will do distinct harm." Wright was a man of his age, and the machine had progressed too far, was too

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exciting to be proscribed. Still, he owed his optimism and his nature-worship to a different inspiration: the East Coast idealists, the moralized Unitarianism of Emerson, Thoreau and their followers, among whom were his father and the Lloyd Joneses. All his life Wright's prose was marked by the preachers' cadences, as he continued to revere Emerson and to quote from his essays.

In the 1860s, H.H. Richardson had already translated the English brick-and-stone manner into a lighter, balloon frame and shingle (or clapboard) idiom. In the following generation, Ralph Emerson (a distant cousin of the writer) and a few others had the courage to follow Richardson away from the formalities which the leading American architects of the time had learned from (or at) the École des Beaux-Arts. Charles McKim and Stanford White, who met in Richardson's office, tried to integrate Japanese features (which were becoming even more fashionable in the United States than in Britain) into their first, very Richardsonian manner; and Bruce Price (the father of Emily Post) was perhaps the most independent and accomplished of the group. But this brilliant period was brief, and the dead hand of the École inevitably fell on them.

The Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893, a vast confection of white plaster columns, was its consecration. Louis Sullivan thought that it would take half a century to undo the damage that "this lewd exhibit of drooling imbecility" did, and he may have been optimistic. Having ditched their Richardsonian-Niponese manner, McKim, Mead and White (Mead had by then joined them) became the most fashionable "classical" architects on the East Coast, as Daniel Burnham came to dominate the Midwest. Wright had himself refused a generous grant that Burnham offered him for four years at the École in Paris, and then two more years in Rome. "I've been too close to Mr. Sullivan," he wrote in his *Autobiography* in 1932. "He has helped to spoil the Beaux-Arts for me, or spoiled me for the Beaux-Arts, I guess I mean."

Burnham recognized Wright as a brilliant draughtsman and designer, though his manner, already highly developed, had nothing of the Beaux-Arts reliance on historic precedents or tight axialities. Wright's draughtsmanship had developed directly and independently out of Sullivan's inventive, "organic" ornamentation, which Burnham must have found raw. It needed some courage not to go "academic" in the 1890s. Wright flirted briefly with the manner, but his own house, one of his first independent works, is an emulation of Bruce Price: shingled gable pierced by a Serlian window (two rectangular lights separated by a higher arch), overshadowing leaded bay windows. Sullivan and a group of his pupils formed (and saw themselves) as a nucleus of resistance, and Wright was recognized as the most gifted and the most prolific of them.

The ideas and the buildings of this group were sufficiently alike for them to receive a label. They were the "Prairie School." An appreciation of their shared ethos seems to me essential to any understanding of Wright, since they all owed something to the transcendentalism and the optimism of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. In building, they shared a reliance on certain materials: brick and sawn, stained timber, exposed plaster surfaces and poured concrete. In planning, the open spaces inherited from the Shingle architects would be anchored by a dominant fireplace. In Wright's own house, the brick overmantle carries a hortatory inscription:

TRUTH IS LIFE.
GOOD FRIEND, AROUND THESE
HEARTH STONES SPEAK NO EVIL
WORD OF ANY CREATURE

And this inscribing and carving of the fireplace and overmantle became one of his trademarks.

In the Winslow House, which was erected in 1893-94 and is sometimes considered the first of Wright's Prairie Houses, the fireplace is set behind a kind of rood-screen, as if it were an altar. In many of Wright's houses, a central flue is fed by more than one hearth, so that it becomes the pillar of the house, its structural core. This central feature was a realization of the idea that Gottfried Semper (1803-79), the German architect and teacher, had preached half a century earlier: that the fireplace is the "moral center" of the home. And Wright had taken over another of Semper's notions: that walls are rigid versions of hanging mats, curtains, brightly colored cloth hangings, and that their place in the scheme of building derives from the fact that textile art is the primary human skill. In Wright's projects, particularly in the houses, the large areas of leaded (and sometimes colored) glazing become images of curtains, while the vastly projecting roofs throw them in shadow, so as to produce an image of the house dominated by the hearth and the sheltering roof.

Wright would have learned about Semper's ideas from his friend John Root, Burnham's partner, who was trans-

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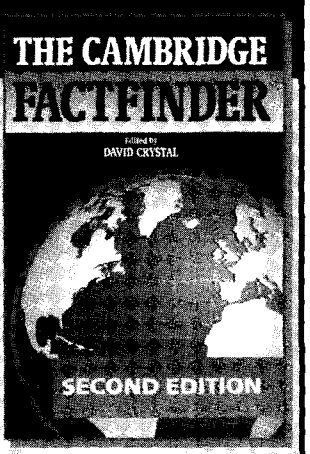

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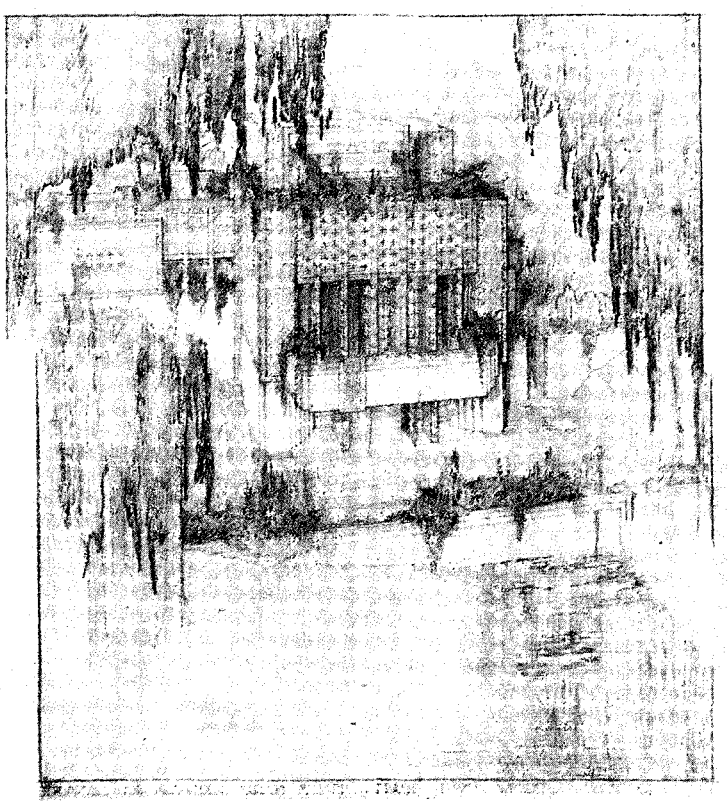
lating passages from Semper's writings for the *Inland Architect*, a Chicago periodical. (The birth of the "curtain wall" in Chicago has sometimes been seen as a gigantic overgrowth of Semper's teaching.) This notion of the wall as a curtain was taken up by other Prairie School architects on a smaller scale. Walter Burley Griffin, who had been the head of Wright's Oak Park studio (they quarreled in 1902), patented "Knitlock," a textile system of concrete blocks. (This was before Wright himself devised the heavily patterned "textile" blocks in the Los Angeles houses of the 1920s.) These achievements of Griffin's have been overshadowed, like his Chicago houses, by his winning, in 1912, the competition for the design of Canberra, the capital of Australia. His plan was based on a hexagonal grid, long before Wright was to adopt it.

As an "organic" architect, Wright had always been interested in the gardens in which his houses stood. Although much was being published at the time on the formal Italian gardens that were being emulated by some of his most successful rivals (as Levine points out), Wright himself was more interested in the different planning that emerged from the picturesque tradition in England. It was best represented by the gardens and the writings of Gertrude Jekyll. In 1900, when a book of hers was published, Wright recommended it to his Oak Park audience: "The formality necessary to harmonize ... growing things ... is sought and found in the architectural nature of the plan, the division, the enclosure, the arrangement ... a charming book by an English woman, Gertrude Jekyll, called *Home and Garden*, shows very well this attitude toward our subject, and it should be in every library."

While Wright emerged, in the Prairie period, as the head of a school, and a lively group of debates and rivalries, the crisis which followed the break-up of his marriage in 1909 and his escape from domesticity (his first wife had borne him six children) to Europe, put him in a rather different context. His new consort, Mamah Borthwick, was a disciple of the Swedish feminist Ellen Key, many of whose radical views on love and marriage and education Wright eagerly adopted. In Tuscany, where he spent much of his self-imposed exile, he would present himself as one of a group of privileged Anglo-American social outcasts. In fact, he was there to work on the first major publication of his buildings, which had been contracted to the Berlin publisher Wasmuth.

In the beginning, Wright and the Prairie School were more important to European architects than to American ones. The Wasmuth publication, certainly, was the first monograph on Wright's work. It, and the monograph issued by the Dutch magazine *Wendingen* in 1925 (with essays by H.P. Berlage, J.J.P. Oud, Erich Mendelsohn and Lewis Mumford), remained Wright's favorites. These publications of Wright's work helped many younger architects in Europe to break with academic constriction, as they bred the first school of European neo-Wrightians, particularly in Holland.



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, MILLARD HOUSE, 1923-24

Courtesy The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Wright traveled, during his European stay, to Paris (where he visited Versailles and examined the Petit Palais) as well as Berlin, but he seems to have had no great interest in what architects were doing there. In Vienna, by contrast, he was fascinated by what was happening in design. Joseph Maria Olbrich, and the artists' colony on the Mathildenhoehe in Darmstadt that he designed, attracted Wright especially, and Olbrich's death shortly before his arrival was a sorrow and a disappointment. He was very taken with the productions of the Wiener Werkstätte and the recent buildings by Josef Hoffmann, as well as with the work of a sculptor with whom Hoffmann collaborated, Franz Metzner, and his pupil Emilie Simandl. He bought a painting by Gustav Klimt and prints by Koloman Moser.

Wright was to acknowledge his debt to Vienna in the Kahn lectures at Princeton in 1930, when he explained that what was happening in Paris then was of little interest to him, since "France ... was still sickened and helpless in the serpentine coils of l'art nouveau (derived from her own deadly rococo)." And in 1935 he castigated the author of a book on architecture and sculpture for not having mentioned Otto Wagner ("the greatest native force at the base of European modernism") or Klimt or Olbrich or Hoffmann.

Curiously enough, Wright's time in Vienna and Berlin were near-contemporary with Corbusier's (who was still called Jeanneret). There is no evidence that they met. But Corbusier did discuss Wright, sometime before 1915, with Auguste Perret, the French architect he most admired, and was instructed by Perret (who could not buy German books because of the war) to get him a copy of the Wasmuth album. Still, their relation was awkward. Corbusier is said to have refused to contribute an essay to the *Wendingen* volume, and Wright, for his part, seems to have considered him the most famous, and therefore the most threatening, of his younger contemporaries. Still, when Corbusier's *Vers une architecture* was published in English, Wright reviewed it favorably, if grudgingly. To him, Corbusier's teaching was merely a reiteration of the lessons that he and Sullivan had been teaching for a generation about the need for an art in and of the machine age, about the integrity of structure; except that Corbusier's statement of these ideas was superficial, without any depth. But he knew that Americans needed the French stamp of approval, then as now, and so he wished that "everyone engaged in making or breaking these United States would read Corbusier's book." Later Wright was to attack

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Corbusier repeatedly, reiterating the accusation that most modern architecture was a misunderstanding of the lesson that he, Wright, and Sullivan, had long been teaching.

On his return to Chicago, Wright received his two biggest commissions to date. The first was for a dance-and-beer establishment called Midway Gardens, a terraced and colonnaded and elaborately ornamented open-air restaurant with a bandstand and stage, and a winter-garden offering very similar accommodation between the terraces and the street. Although the enterprise was a victim of the 1929 crash, and the buildings were destroyed, it has been often and generously documented. This, with the Larkin building in Buffalo, also destroyed, was Wright's most important work in the United States at the time, but it is barely mentioned in Levine's book. The other commission was for the huge Imperial Hotel in Tokyo: two low wings of rooms separated by central interconnected pavilions housing roomy, opulent foyers, lobbies, restaurants and so on. When the hotel was recently rebuilt and much enlarged, the entrance pavilion was reassembled at Nagoya as part of a Museum of the Meiji era. Levine devotes one of his best chapters to this project.

Wright's Viennese alliances played an important and underestimated part in the flowering of his work around the time of the First World War. He had become a much more secure builder: the resistance of the Imperial Hotel to the seismic shocks of the great earthquake in September 1923 (which destroyed much of the city) was a matter of great pride to him. It was then relatively new, even if the building of it had taken all of a decade. But it also marked Wright's attempt to devise a formal, ornamental language to meet that of the Japanese builders, and to improvise constructional methods within which they could work. There is nothing timid about his manner: it is exuberant and original. In Midway Gardens, too, the large wall paintings in the enclosed winter-garden were designed as if they were ornamental details and executed by craftsmen, though they almost look as if they had been painted by Kandinsky or Kupka or Delaunay, while the statuary, carved to Wright's drawings, is clearly modeled on Emilie Simandl's work for Josef Hoffmann. And the large house that he was to build in Los Angeles for Aline Barnsdall at about this time is the first building in which Wright worked through his fascination with Mesoamerican art.

I have insisted on this Anglo-Viennese

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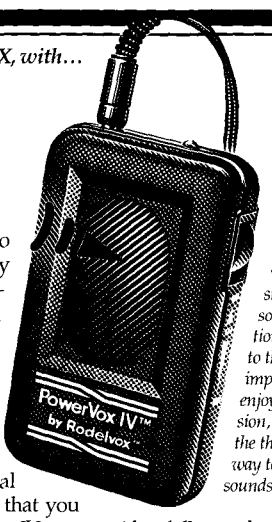

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debt of Wright's, but then he made no secret of it himself, and it has recently received detailed attention from Anthony Alofsin, whose study of the subject was published too late to be useful to Levine. Of course, the Anglo-Viennese Wright fits a little awkwardly with the "timeless classicism" of which Levine makes much. In his later years, Wright, who increasingly saw himself as an isolated giant, was not interested in reiterating it.

Wright could accept criticism from clients, but not from colleagues. The personality traits that made it difficult for him to accept another's spiritual authority made him into a dominant and sometimes tyrannical guru. When he took up with (and married) Olgivanna Hinzenberg (who had come to the United States from Gurdjieff's notorious community at *Fontainebleau*), the Taliesin fellowship that he had set up in 1932 in Wisconsin (with winter quarters in Arizona), at first loosely based on Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft community, assumed an exploitative and even cultic character. It is well-known that Corbusier did not pay his assistants, but Wright's assistants not only drew his designs, they also worked his farming estate, and they would regularly worship the master at Sunday evening assemblies. Nor did this cult stop with Wright's death. The widow continued to receive spiritual instruction from him, and "Mr. Wright" is still (or was until recently) talked of as a living presence at Taliesin West in Arizona.

And yet, for all his pretensions and his posturings, Wright's genius persists astonishingly to the last. Much of the later work is not merely kitsch (Levine is a little shy of the word), it is spoiled by a really sickening, space-age vulgarity. His 1957-58 project for Baghdad, which grew out of a commission for a grand opera, with its giant statue of Harun-ar-Rashid atop an archaic minaret, is not only terrifying in its vacuity, it is also based on a total misconception of Islamic urban pageant. At the same time, when he was nearly 90, Wright used some of the features which he had debased in the Baghdad project to create a startlingly appropriate Civic Center for Marin County, just north of San Francisco, with a long, top-lit public space set over and open to the driveway below, its working rooms housed in two wings linked by a dome and ascendingly arched like a viaduct. Even more astonishing is the very discreet Masieri memorial hostel, which (so I think) would have looked splendid next to the Palazzo Balbi on the Grand Canal in Venice—tightly planned, vertically accentuated and faced in the same pale Dalmatian stone as the old palace. It is to the credit of his Italian colleagues that so many Italian architects and art-historians supported the proposal, while a bunch of American notables (Bernard Berenson, Ernest Hemingway, the socialite and fund-raiser Marie Beale) joined the vociferous preservationist opposition. Levine has valuable things to say about all these schemes.

Even in the worst of these very varied projects, the mastery of surface and volume that Wright showed in his first buildings never quite left him. This mastery is as evident in the Prairie houses as it is in the Marin County Civic Center. Behind or beyond the felicities and the failures, there is the unwavering integrity of his aim, which Mumford summarized in his *Wendingen* essay seventy years ago, when he said that Wright had attempted to apply the logic of the machine to humane building. Owing to its ambitions and to its failures, Wright's achievement will continue to demand interpretation and reinterpretation, to which Neil Levine has brilliantly contributed.

JOSEPH RYKWERT is Paul Philippe Cret Professor of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and the author most recently of *The Dancing Column: On The Orders of Architecture* (MIT Press).

Two cheers for Jean-Jacques.

Civilization and Its Malcontent

BY ISAAC KRAMNICK

I.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau has been everyone's villain in recent decades. For a European intellectual such as Isaiah Berlin, he was the theoretical source of totalitarianism, the century's scourge. For an American neoconservative such as Allan Bloom, he was the false prophet whose ways of living and thinking inspired radical students and countercultural dropouts in the 1960s. For a feminist such as Eva Figes, Rousseau was the epitome of male chauvinist "patriarchal attitudes."

Not bad for a writer and semi-hermit who has been dead for 200 years. Rousseau's life is one of the grand narratives of modernity; and it has now received its definitive chronicle in Maurice Cranston's *The Solitary Self*, the third and final volume in his magisterial biography of Rousseau. This book concludes a project some twenty years in the making. It is published, alas, three years after Cranston's death.

Rousseau, of course, left biographers his own *Confessions*, which he described, with characteristic modesty, as the first true autobiography ever written, the very first effort of a writer to lay bare his soul with utter truthfulness. It turns out the truthfulness in the *Confessions* is not quite so thoroughgoing. It is Cranston who is now, without doubt, our best guide to this fascinating life.

Rousseau was born in Calvinist Geneva in 1712. His mother died giving birth to him, and he was raised first by an abusive father who deserted him at the age of 10, and then for several years by other relatives. At 16, Rousseau set off on his own, moving first to Savoy, where he converted to Catholicism under the tutelage of the well-born Madame de Warens, thirteen years his senior and herself a recent convert. (He would later come back to Protestantism.) In the next several years she became Rousseau's beloved "maman," introducing him to the pleasures of the mind and

ISAAC KRAMNICK teaches and writes about politics at Cornell University. His most recent book (with R. Laurence Moore) is *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness* (W.W. Norton).

Jean-Jacques:
The Early Life and Work of
Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1712-1754
by Maurice Cranston
(University of Chicago Press, 382 pp., $21.95)

The Noble Savage:
Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1754-1762
by Maurice Cranston
(University of Chicago Press, 399 pp., $37.50)

The Solitary Self:
Jean-Jacques Rousseau
in Exile and Adversity
by Maurice Cranston
with a foreword by Sanford Lakoff
(University of Chicago Press, 247 pp., $29.95)

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the pleasures of the body, too.

Never formally schooled, Rousseau restlessly moved from one career to another. He was an engraver, a cashier, a clerk, a domestic servant, a private tutor, an itinerant musician, a diplomatic secretary and, ultimately, a playwright, a poet, a composer, an essayist, a philosopher and a novelist. His compositions and his writings made little money in his lifetime, and most of Rousseau's income came from his earnings as a music copyist. In his 30s he became a minor figure in the philosophical circle in Paris that included Diderot and d'Alembert, the editors of the *Encyclopédie*, the towering monument of the Enlightenment in France, which included several articles by Rousseau on music.

Fame came to Rousseau in the early 1750s, with the *Discourse on Arts and Sciences* and the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, both of which rejected the central creed of the Enlightenment, its belief in progress fueled by reason, science and commerce. For Rousseau, men were naturally good, "noble savages," who were corrupted by civilization. As society and its institutions evolved, primitive innocence and natural honesty were replaced by artificiality and falseness. His assault on the ideals of the *philosophes* alienated him from their company, most dramatically from Voltaire, who never forgave Rousseau for his criticisms.

Meanwhile, Rousseau's literary and cultural reputation in Parisian society was enhanced by his opera *Le Devin du Village*, or *The Village Soothsayer*, and by his play *Narcisse*. He also engaged in a famous dispute with the composer Rameau in his *Letter on French Music*. Rousseau championed Italian music as more expressive of human feeling, while denouncing French music as lifeless and academic. But it would be Rousseau's novel, *Julie*, known also as *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which, in 1761, brought him lasting fame as one of Europe's most celebrated writers. With this book, which seemed to herald the end of "the Age of Reason," he became a dominant figure in European culture, the focus of a cult of romantic sensibility.

In the way he lived his life, Rousseau helped to shape that cult. He broke with his sophisticated Parisian friends, and in his mid-40s, he left Paris, never to live in a city again. For the next twenty years he lived in the countryside, usually in simple dwellings, where he wrote in the morning and walked in the afternoon, often around twenty miles each day. He fled polite society and, as he put it, bade goodbye forever to "Paris, city of noise, smoke and mud, where women no longer believe in honor or men in virtue. Farewell Paris. In our search for love, happiness, and innocence, we can never be far enough away from you."

Much of his rural existence was shared with Thérèse Levasseur, an uneducated laundry maid, eleven years younger than Rousseau. From 1742 until his death, in 1778, she was at his side. They were married in 1769, after having five children. Each of those children were "left" at Catholic orphanages, which shocked the world after Rousseau had become famous. (The world was given the details of the abandonments in a pamphlet by Voltaire.)

But Rousseau suffered greater misfortune than being labeled immoral by a fickle public. He was bitterly persecuted for his political and religious writings. In *Émile*, the famous novel about childhood and education, Rousseau outlined a romantic version of deism, according to which God could be experienced in nature, and true religion needed neither priests, prayer nor churches. Returning to a kind of radical Protestantism, Rousseau saw God reached by each individual's own sublime contemplation. In that same year, 1762, Rousseau's *The Social Contract* preached a radically egalitarian repudiation of monarchy and aristocracy and called for

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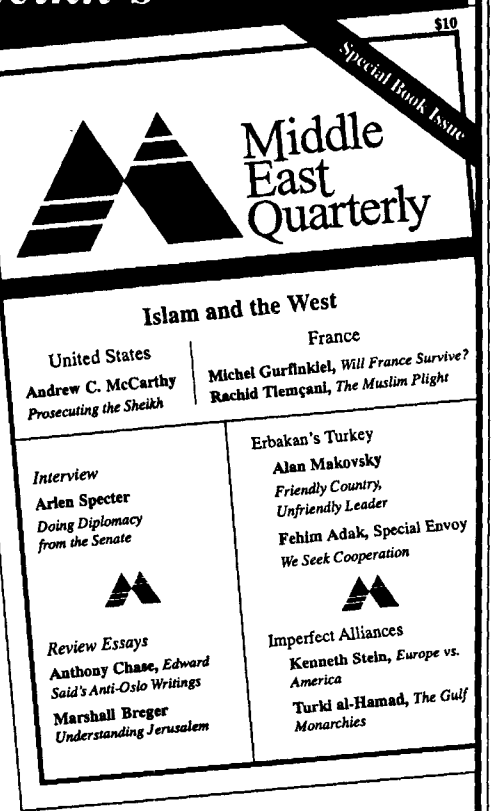

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a democratic participatory politics of equal citizens. Both books were banned in France and Geneva; copies were either confiscated or burned by the public executioner.

For his subversion of religion, the Parliament in Paris ordered Rousseau arrested. He fled the French authorities and settled in Berne, Switzerland, but he soon had to flee Berne as well, and ultimately sought asylum in rural England, where his sponsor was David Hume. After an angry falling out with Hume, Rousseau returned to rural France, avoiding confrontations with the authorities by agreeing to publish nothing on politics or religion.

In his *Confessions*, which is what he turned to in these years, Rousseau dwelled at length on the conspiracies against him. He saw plots, spies and enemies everywhere, from Diderot to Voltaire to Hume. They were all jealous of his fame and his following, the paranoid Rousseau ranted. In turn, Hume described Rousseau as "absolutely lunatic," and Diderot, writing of him to a friend, noted "that man is insane." Rousseau's appearance and behavior were often bizarre; but it is also clear that Voltaire *did* seek to ruin Rousseau, and Rousseau *was* persecuted by French and Swiss political and religious authorities.

Sensing himself hounded and hunted, Rousseau retired to a cottage, provided by an aristocratic admirer, about thirty miles from Paris. There he died of a stroke in July 1778, at the age of 66. Thérèse outlived him by twenty-two years, dying in 1800. By then, of course, Rousseau had become, through his life and writings, a major figure in European culture, and so he would remain to this day.

II.

What do we make of recent readings of Rousseau? What, for example, of the insistence of cold war scholars and thinkers that he was the source of the totalitarian ideal? When Isaiah Berlin labeled Rousseau "the most sinister and most formidable enemy of liberty in the whole history of modern thought," and Jacob Talmon branded him the father of "the totalitarian messianic temperament," they were indicting the Rousseau of *The Social Contract.* In Rousseau's discussion of the community's right to force men to be free in the name of a unitary, single truth, in his notion of a general will defined by an unrestrained direct democracy, they find the roots of popular dictatorship, of totalitarian democracy. In the "legislator," who, according to Rousseau, may have to promulgate laws that the people must follow, they find the autocratic model for Robespierre, Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin. This reading notes that Robespierre justified his reign of terror with Rousseauian language. Speaking of his Committee of Public Safety, he claimed that "our will is the general will" while insisting that "the government of the Revolution is the despotism of liberty against tyranny."

Against this school of interpretation there are defenders of Rousseau, such as Maurice Cranston, who see in *The Social Contract* only the argument that freedom always involves the state's coercive laws legitimately forcing men not to follow their own will if it violates communal freedom. This reading suggests that Rousseau sees freedom expressed not in the absence of restraints on individuals, but in the individual's participation in the exercise of legislative power. To be free is not to be left alone by the state; it is to be involved in making the laws that serve the common good, laws which invariably restrain the liberty of some. Rousseau was not an early totalitarian, he was an early communitarian.

The Social Contract, in Cranston's view, describes a utopian, free, democratic state, a true community, in which egoistic liberalism is transcended and human nature transformed. In it, humanity would realize what Marx would call its species potential. "Each individual, who is by himself a complete and solitary whole," will recognize himself as "part of a greater whole" from which he receives "life and being." Acknowledging that "each citizen is nothing and can do nothing without the rest" produces a moral polity. With the triumph of the general will over particular wills, citizens "respect the sacred bonds of their respective communities, they will love their fellow citizens." Rousseau's communitarian politics privileges the public sphere over the private sphere. "The better the Constitution of a State is," Rousseau writes, "the more do public affairs encroach on private in the minds of the citizens."

Far from totalitarian despotism, such a reading portrays Rousseau as the theorist of democratic community. Far from being the avatar of an intrusive superstate, like the revolutionary France of the Jacobins, or the nightmare regimes of Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia, Rousseau is the theorist of small, self-governing communities that are simple, egalitarian and democratic. All authority that is not derived from the people themselves is suspect. Freedom for Rousseau, as Cranston puts it, was "largely a matter of participating in ... making the laws one lived under."

So we have the totalitarian Rousseau and the communitarian Rousseau—and both of them sit uneasily with Rousseau the arch-individualist, the lyrical poet of the unfettered self, the solitary, isolated and alienated ego, so central to his romanticism. For his contemporaries in France, Rousseau was the sworn enemy of monarchical and aristocratic tyranny, indeed of all authority. In his *Confessions* he promoted his "free and republican spirit, that proud and strong character, impatient of any yoke or servitude." As one of his contemporaries put it, after a meal with Rousseau: "We came to speak of liberty. Rousseau is singular on the subject. He not only wants to be free himself; he wants everyone to be, even his dog."

The response of the political and clerical authorities in Paris and Geneva, who burned his books and ordered his arrest, also sheds critical light on the picture of Rousseau as an apologist for despotism. As do Rousseau's *Discourses*, in which naturally free and good individuals are oppressed and corrupted by the political and economic structures of rich and advanced societies. Rousseau's impulsive radicalism undermines the authoritarian monster depicted by Berlin and Talmon. Rousseau described his radical project as an attempt "to strip mankind's nature naked," and thereby to expose all that had "disfigured him." "Man as nature made him" was stifled by civilization, and was everywhere in misery and chains. Thirty years later, during the French Revolution, Edmund Burke would mock Rousseau's radicalism by inverting his sartorial metaphor. Burke denounced the egalitarian implications of humanity stripped of "the decent drapery of life," that was "furnished from the wardrobe" of social tradition and deference. "On this scheme of things, a king is but a man, a queen is but a woman." Burke would cover "our naked, shivering nature" with the clothing that is "our manners, our civilization," supplied by the institutions of monarchy, aristocracy and church.

III.

The reading of Rousseau as the patron saint of student activism and the counterculture makes more sense. Neoconservative critics of the New Left such as Walter Berns and Allan Bloom, and even old-left critics of the New Left such as Irving Howe, were right to see in Rousseau the original source of the ambivalent commitment to both community and individuality that haunted

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the '60s rebels. The yearning for community in *The Social Contract* is found writ large in the Port Huron Statement, with its call for "fraternity," its confident claim that politics "has the function of bringing people out of isolation and into community." Participatory democracy, the battle cry of the '60s, has the unmistakable ring of Rousseau, as did the unfortunate tendency of some of this rhetoric to end in authoritarian politics. So, too, does the public nature of '60s politics. The Rousseau who would have replaced stuffy theaters, which closed off and separated individuals from one another, with communal public festivals, pageants and games in the open air would have appreciated the be-ins, the happenings, the Woodstocks of the '60s.

And there was another side to the '60s, an individualistic, nearly anarchic mood, an imperative that the young "do their own thing." Resisting the allegedly stifling conformity of the affluent Eisenhower 1950s, the SDS manifesto also called for "honesty" and for "finding a meaning in life that is personally authentic." Alongside the fraternity of the counterculture's music, hair and dress, there was the loneliness and the alienation of isolated and wandering flower-child egos. For this glorification of existential separateness, and the repudiation of social conformity, the students of the '60s had no better source in the canonical university texts than Rousseau.

Rousseau constructed an anti-heroic self of solitude, of the outsider ill at ease with and suspicious of social routine. He saw himself as the world-weary outcast, the "hermit who has renounced the pleasures of life," the "wanderer, with no family, and almost no country." It was a mythic construction, of course, not least for its shedding of any embarrassing reminders of Rousseau's own family. In his last work, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, written the year of his death, Rousseau wrote that "here I am, alone on the earth, with no longer a brother, neighbor, friend or society other than myself." He drifted from place to place, preferring always to be alone with Thérèse in rustic simplicity near shimmering lakes, enveloping woods and rugged mountains, always the solitary walker.

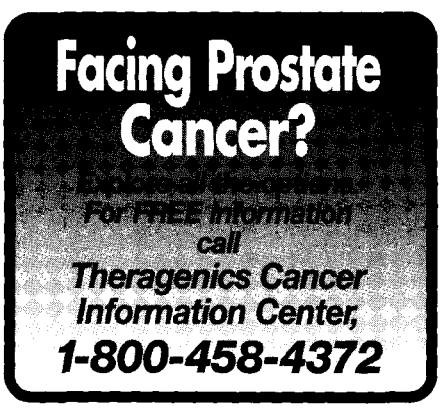
In his theater of self, Rousseau was open and spontaneous. Rejecting what he saw as the falseness of social formalities, he was intensely emotional. He ostentatiously embraced and kissed friends, often throwing himself around their necks. He was tactless and direct, oafish and vulgar. As with Tom Paine, Rousseau's boorishness was aggressively staged to illustrate his contempt for the elite, the talentless fools whose polished manners covered emptiness and superficiality. Rousseau wore shabby, threadbare and often bizarre clothing. During the last decades of his life he appeared in flowing Armenian robes and caftans, with a round fur hat. The solitary self was authentic and true to itself, free from pedestrian public pressures to conform.

The solitary self listens to "the true voice of feeling." And with this creed at the heart of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Rousseau's self-image itself became the romantic ideal. Set in the mountains, lakes and villages of Switzerland, the novel is an intense tale of clashing passions. Rousseau's characters are not rational actors who suppress their feelings. They listen to their inner voices and express their loves. Readers, especially women readers, were transported as Julie fell in love with her tutor St-Preux, encouraging him to take her and promising to be his forever. But Julie also loves her father, and when he insists that she marry someone of her own class she lays aside her love for St-Preux and does as her father wishes—not, Rousseau insists, from a sense of duty, heaven forfend, but for the love of her father, whose heart would break if she were to follow her own heart. Julie's heart is tempted again years later when St-Preux returns, and their romance is rekindled on excursions through lovingly depicted Alpine scenery. The painful and sublime test of their feelings ends with every romantic's *deus ex machina*, death.

IV.

Eighteenth-century women might have thrown themselves at Rousseau's feet, but today's feminists see him as the modern spokesman for a view of women that demeans and subordinates them. Along with Aristotle and Paul, he is a founding father of Western patriarchy. And what makes his misogyny more difficult to understand, let alone excuse, is that Rousseau (as many since Mary Wollstonecraft have noted) is the first important egalitarian theorist in the Western canon. But he is an egalitarian of men.

Rousseau's views on women are scattered throughout his writings, but they are particularly concentrated in *Émile*. They make up the traditional litany of what we now recognize as sexism. "Consult the woman's opinions in bodily matters, in all that concerns the senses," he advises Émile, "consult the man's in matters of morality and all that concerns the understanding.... The man should be strong and active; the woman should be weak and passive; the one must have both the power and the will; it is enough that the other should offer little resistance." A woman, Émile is told, "is specially made for man's delight." She "is made to please and to be in subjection to man." Her responsibility is "to be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy." She must also be obedient, "for she will always be in subjection to a man, or to man's judgment, and she will never be free to set her



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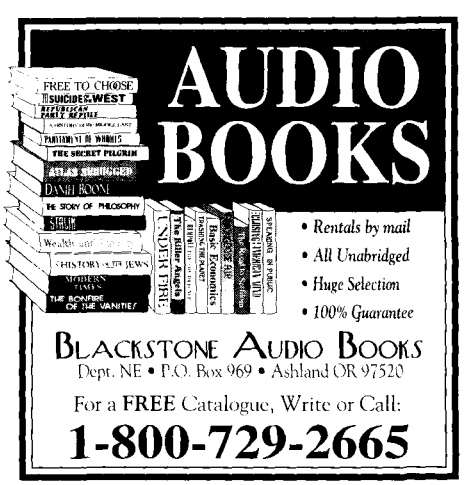
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own opinion above his." A woman, he writes, should learn "to submit to injustice and to suffer the wrongs inflicted on her by her husband without complaint."

There is no point in denying it: Rousseau was a sexist, and the feminist criticisms are justified. But the story of Rousseau and gender does not end there. There are counterthemes in his writings that complicate judgment. One cannot read *La Nouvelle Héloïse* without sensing his bitter indictment of marriage as a commercial transaction. Julie asks herself if her father has sold her. "Yes, he has made his daughter into a piece of goods ... and profited at my expense. He has paid for his life with mine!" Rousseau envisions marriage as a choice made "more on their hearts." In place of marriages arranged for family profit, Rousseau proposes in the *Letter to d'Alembert* that public festivals be held where youth of marriageable age "have occasion to get a taste for one another and to see one another ... which better permits them to show themselves off, with the charms and the faults which they might possess, to the people whose interest it is to know them well." And Rousseau, like Wollstonecraft, can be read as also pleading for marriage based not only on physical and sexual attraction, but also on friendship that survives aging and the death of physical desire. In later years, St-Preux promises Julie that, "when age had calmed the first fires of our love, the habit of thinking and feeling together would generate a friendship no less tender to succeed our transports."

On the question of sexuality itself, it is also possible to discern a different Rousseau. The conventional wisdom is that Rousseau regards women as passive objects designed by nature for male gratification. There is ample evidence of this in his novels, in the *Letter to d'Alembert* and most self-consciously in his treatment of Sophie in *Émile*. Still, a careful reading of Rousseau reveals that he had a more complicated appreciation of female sexuality. In the *Letter to d'Alembert*, he describes sexual desire and passion as "equal on both sides." Why, then, must "the order of attack and defense" have man "the maker" and woman "the receiver" of "advances"? His answer is that "nature wanted it so." Man must be audacious; "someone has to declare." But it is not simply nature that would have it so; it is also Rousseau. He is, in fact, preoccupied with what he sees as the limitless nature of female sexuality. Sophie has "sexual power" that "is or appears to be boundless," in contrast to which Rousseau laments "the limited power of the male, and the moderation of his desires." Sophie's nature is "inflammable." She herself worries about her desires; "she doubts her control of herself." Rousseau worries about the possibility of women dominating men as a result of the insatiable quality of their desires. He fears that "men tyrannized over by women, would at last become their victims, and would be dragged to their death."

Rousseau advises that "this enthusiasm must be kept in check." But how might society defend itself against women's natural inclination "to carry everything to extremes"? Rousseau's suggestion is not to leave women "for a moment without restraint." The restraint is not physical, it is ideological. He proposes the ideal of women as timid, modest and chaste, her desires "veiled by shame." We are left, then, with Rousseau's ideal of female sexual passivity and obedience as an artifice designed to repress an otherwise uncontrollable female sexual assertiveness. He seems to exemplify the feminist claim that fear of female sexuality is the source of male domination.

There was an important respect, though, in which Rousseau departed from this feminist linkage of domination to fear, and that was his own sexual life. Nature and his own writings may have destined women "to let themselves be vanquished" and to be always the "submitting" partner, but in his own bed Rousseau was the passive, submissive male to dominant, assertive females. His "tastes and desires ... passions" throughout his life, he writes in his *Confessions*, were "diametrically opposed" to what "should normally have developed." His "peculiarity," as he described it, was to experience sexual pleasure only if he were "to fall on my knees before a powerful mistress, to obey her commands, to beg for her forgiveness." Also essential was "the one favor" necessary for ultimate gratification: being beaten by his lover.

Rousseau weaves his masochistic fantasies and desires through his autobiography and his fiction. He writes candidly of encounters in which his longing for an imperious governess has him splayed across her knees, or of lurking in dark alleys exposing his bottom to passing women and girls, hoping to entice them into spanking him. The great love of his life, the Comtesse d'Houdetot, the model for Sophie, won his heart when she came to him in the country on horseback "and in men's clothes ... this time it was love." Julie seduces St-Preux and dominates him with "powerful sway." He, in turn, tells Julie, "you were made to rule ... you impose your will on mine. I am nothing in your presence."

The feminist reading of Rousseau as all phallic aggression needs rethinking. His private need certainly belied his public creed. One reason may well be that Rousseau was plagued throughout his life with a malfunctioning penis and chronic urinary problems. To his publisher, the Dutchman Rey, Rousseau wrote in the winter of 1762: "*Je suis froid, je suis triste, je pisse mal.*" More important still, Rousseau reports in his *Confessions* that he totally abandoned phallic sexuality in his late 40s, since it aggravated his difficulties.

Folded into the narrative of his colorful life and career, Rousseau's malady does more than inform the contradictions of his attitudes toward women. It helps to account for his avoidance of town, for his preference for rural solitude. It may also lie behind his preference for robes and caftans: he told Boswell that he constantly carried a chamber pot with him. It also helps explain his lifelong loyal attachment to Thérèse. She was as much his nurse, washing and arranging his catheters, as she was his lover, his servant and his wife.

V.

These intimate details of Rousseau's body, of his need to be dominated, of his preference for ample-bosomed women, are provided by Maurice Cranston, the consummate English scholar, who devoted more than two decades to Rousseau's biography before his untimely death. With English understatement, Cranston does not dwell on these sexual and bodily themes, but he certainly notices them, and he lets us know about them. Generally, he keeps a critical distance from these and other subjects, which is part of his self-proclaimed biographical method. Let others who write on Rousseau get carried away by controversy. Cranston's approach is to offer "a Lockean account, based on empirical sources." He avoids engaging in interpretative debate with the vast literature on his subject and provides instead "impartial pursuit of the facts." His aim is a biography "less critical than explanatory," and explanation, he insists, "*se trouve dans les détails.*"

And he has certainly given us the particulars. This amazing biography, like Boswell's account of Johnson, recreates the daily life of Rousseau, what he did, who he saw, what he said, what he wrote. From every archive in Europe, from every letter and page that Rousseau wrote, Cranston marshals the facts so

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meticulously that we may be quite confident that we hold in our hands the authoritative account of this life. We learn the smallest things: for example, that the English locals in 1766 called their illustrious visiting French neighbor "Mr. Ross Hall" and Thérèse "Madame Zell." Along the way Cranston provides brilliant summaries and readings of Rousseau's voluminous writings.

But there is a price for this thoroughness. The reader often wants Cranston to drop his cool and enter the fray of interpretation. One wants more than the exegetical diffidence that is expressed in labeling complex issues "curious" or "puzzling." Thus, Cranston chronicles in great detail Voltaire's vicious campaigns against Rousseau, including his behind-the-scenes efforts to have the books burned and their author prosecuted; but Voltaire's vindictiveness begs analysis, and all that Cranston offers is that "it is difficult to understand why Voltaire should have hated Rousseau so much; perhaps Voltaire did not understand it himself." Sometimes explanation is *not* in the details.

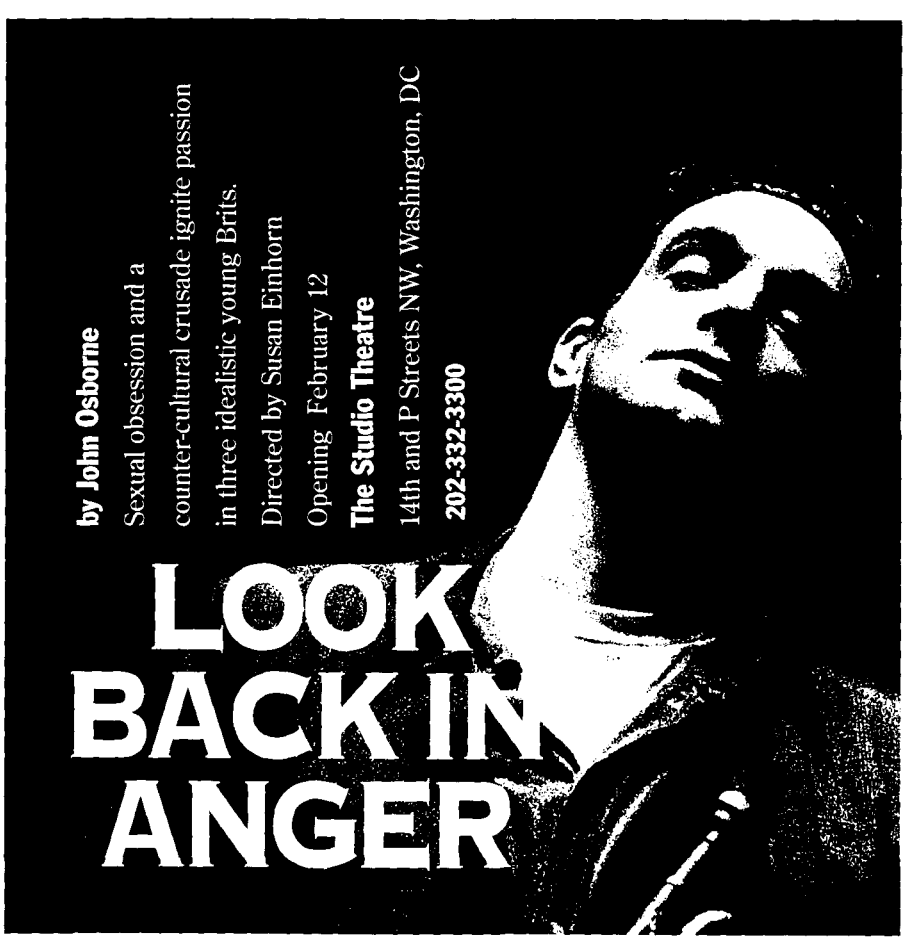
But this is quibbling. Cranston's Rousseau, its final volume so lovingly completed by his friends, will be the definitive Rousseau. Well, then, who is this authority to whom twenty-first century readers will turn to learn of Rousseau and the solitary self? Not surprisingly, there are Rousseauian echoes in Cranston's life, and glaring differences. Cranston was born in 1920, into a bohemian family. His father was a theater manager who left England to seek his fortune, and his mother died when he was a child. Raised by relatives, Cranston was schooled in France and at Oxford. His first career was as a freelance writer; he published a detective novel in 1946 and wrote film criticism. After World War II, he turned to the academy and from 1950 to 1985 he taught political philosophy at the London School of Economics.

Cranston wrote *Freedom* in 1953, and *Human Rights Today* in 1954, before achieving scholarly renown with a biography of John Locke in 1957. His great work on Rousseau was composed in three volumes. *Jean-Jacques*, covering the years between 1712 and 1754, appeared in Britain in 1982, and *The Noble Savage*, covering the years between 1754 and 1762, appeared in 1991. Cranston also translated Rousseau's essays. He collapsed and died from a heart attack in November 1993 while taping a television broadcast for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation on Margaret Thatcher's memoirs.

Cranston's politics bore no resemblance to Rousseau's politics. And that is quite a testament to his empirical approach: Cranston's account of this philosopher with whom he was in deep philosophical disagreement is scrupulously fair. Cranston was a neoconservative. He frequently contributed to *Encounter*, and in his last years he also wrote for *The American Spectator*. Where Cranston parted company from his conservative friends was in his lifelong commitment to the liberal ideal of human rights. He was an officer of PEN and always came to the defense of writers suffering from censorship and other forms of repression, though he came to lament what he considered the proliferation of rights in England, "to such things as holidays with pay, free wigs, false teeth and free cosmetic surgery."

Nor was Cranston an egalitarian like Rousseau. He could be surprisingly supercilious toward people whom he took to be his social inferiors, and he would never be found in shabby or informal dress. A colleague reports that Cranston once showed up at an extremely informal American college campus dressed to the nines in his blue blazer and foulard. The colleague said to him, "Maurice, you are forgetting where you are." To which he immediately replied: "No, it is rather that I am remembering who I am." Rousseau would have liked that reply, the honest sense of self and the defiance of social conformity that it expressed.

What an achievement that such a man could produce this monument of scholarship. And how ironic that Americans now have this definitive Rousseau from the pen of a conservative Englishman. For Rousseau's contemporaries in France saw America as the validation of Rousseau's democratic and egalitarian vision. Revolutionary Paris linked him with America. As the story goes, on October 9, 1794, Rousseau's coffin was unearthed in rural Ermenonville with musicians playing tunes he had composed. An immense crowd met the body in Paris shouting "*Vive la République! Vive la mémoire de Jean-Jacques Rousseau!*" And at the head of the procession escorting Rousseau's remains, in the place of honor, was a captain of the United States Navy, carrying the Stars and Stripes. When the coffin was reburied in the Panthéon, the American Minister in Paris, James Monroe, was the only foreign guest invited to witness the ceremony. So much for Isaiah Berlin's Rousseau, the enemy of liberty. Better Maurice Cranston's. •



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Not so smart

"WILLIAM SCOTT, 81, CONGRESSMAN SYMBOLIZING G.O.P. RISE IN SOUTH" read the headline over the brief obit in *The New York Times*, and the name registered just familiar enough to give my roving eye pause. Oh, of course—*Bill* Scott.

WHETHER BECAUSE SCOTT DIDN'T rate or just because he had the rotten luck to die on Presidents' Day weekend, the piece was not a full-scale *Times* sendoff but a mere AP wire story, seven column inches below the fold, no photo. The fourth paragraph pretty well summed it up: "His upset victory in 1972—over the Democratic incumbent William B. Spong Jr. with 51 percent of the vote—made him the first Republican to win a Senate seat from Virginia since Reconstruction."

I QUICKLY SCANNED THE REST AND saw, with an odd mix of disappointment and relief, that the detail I was looking for was absent. Unsatisfied, I snatched up the trusty *New York Post*, which also used the AP story but included some additional material. And there it was: "In a 1974 poll conducted by *New Times* magazine, Scott was selected 'dumbest congressman' by 200 congressmen, journalists and lobbyists."

LOPING DOWNSTAIRS TO THE LIVing room, I found my 15-year-old daughter, home for the holiday. I thrust the *Post* under her nose and pointed out the relevant line. It was a moment before she remembered the story I'd told at the family dinner table and placed Scott. Then she said: "They put it right in his obituary!" I tried to look less pleased than I felt. But she caught my smirk and cast me an unexpectedly severe look of her own. "Aren't you ashamed?"

THE ANSWER TO THAT IS SO COMplicated that it's taken a couple of days to sort out. My Bill Scott story goes back to the fall of 1972, when, fresh out of journalism school, I helped launch an alternative weekly in Richmond, Virginia. This was the season of Nixon-McGovern—an hour and a half north, Woodward and Bernstein were still alone on the Watergate trail—and we at *The Richmond Mercury* were determined to cause a little stir of our own. I can't remember how, but I was the one who landed the job of going hammer and tong after Scott, the conservative Northern Virginia congressman challenging the moderate Democratic incumbent Spong.

SCOTT TURNED OUT TO BE AN astonishingly easy target. Two years before, *Washingtonian* had run a piece alleging that no one in Congress was more loathed by his own staff—and I had simply to re-interview many of the same sources. Though mostly anonymous, they told tales of amazing penury, mean-spiritedness, bigotry, personal grossness. "His colleagues hate him," as the first unnamed source was quoted right up top. "He's irascible, uncooperative and they avoid him. He's the cheapest man in the world. That story about him making his secretary wash rusty paper clips is absolutely true. He would wash out and dry toilet paper if he could."

"MANY PEOPLE ON THE HILL SEEM to think as little of Scott's record as they do of his personality," I wrote a bit further on, adding that "liberals compare him unfavorably with such fellow conservatives as Joel Broyhill and J. Kenneth Robinson.... Notes one California Congressman 'at least you have to respect Broyhill. He's conscientious, intelligent and thoughtful. Scott? Why, he's just a lightweight.'"

THAT'S ONLY ONE WAY THE PIECE strove for the requisite gloss of objectivity. I also quoted Scott's campaign manager and an ex-staffer in his defense. But no one was kidding anyone, the piece was ideological to the core. Not only would we never have run such an attack on Scott's Democratic opponent, we'd likely have dismissed anyone who did as a reactionary. Indeed, after the brouhaha the piece provoked had died down, and Scott was elected, I had an additional jolt of pleasure when it was reprinted in *Ramparts*, *the* left-wing publication of the era.

THE WHOLE BUSINESS WAS SO INtensely satisfying that, a year or so later, when a couple of us from the *Mercury* moved on to *New Times*, a fledgling glossy aimed at the young, progressive mainstream, we set our sights on the irresistible Scott. Since, obviously, I could not do the piece myself, the assignment was given to our Washington correspondent. We further obfuscated its origins by focusing less on Scott's other character flaws than on his brains, naming him King of Dumb, with our writer selecting nine other alleged congressional lightweights to serve (as the accompanying illustration had it) as his dimwit court. The piece was a tour de force: not just scathing, but almost sorrowful that such numbskulls strode the corridors of power. And since fully half of the dumbest were Democrats—and a couple of those liberals—it actually read as nonpartisan.

BUT IT WAS SCOTT HIMSELF WHO secured its reputation, not to mention his own, when he held a press conference to deny the charge in this obscure little publication that he was the dumbest member of Congress, pointing to the refugees from *The Richmond Mercury* as his tormentors.

I MEAN, OKAY, IT *was* funny. But, in retrospect, it was also something else: stark evidence of our own smug self-certainty; and more, if one wants to get grandiose about it, another small step in journalism's wanton retreat from even-handedness.

MY DAUGHTER, THE KINDEST SOUL I know, asked the other day if I thought we ruined his life. It's certainly possible. Indeed, reading through the stories almost twenty-five years after the fact, I actually find myself hoping Scott truly was as thick and oblivious as we claimed and, thus, so emotionally disconnected he was able to finish out his undistinguished career, and move on.

SO AM I ASHAMED? I GUESS SO. NOT because I was necessarily wrong about Scott, but because I really didn't care much if I got it right. That was the nature of the corruption, and it was especially invidious because it was born of motives that felt so pure.

READING THE SCOTT OBITS, WHAT gave me particular pause was that he taught an adult Sunday school class for twenty years and was president of three parent-teacher associations. Also this, in the *Post*: "Scott was born in Williamsburg [Virginia], one of five children of a locomotive engineer. When he was 8 years old, his father died while saving passengers at a washed-out trestle."

HOW WAS IT, I WONDERED, THAT, in all my seeking after information on the man, I never knew about that?

HARRY STEIN

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